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Teaching Musical Theatre Skills in the Performance-Based Classroom: James and the Giant Peach

Kelsey Alys Meiklejohn

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

TEACHING MUSICAL THEATRE SKILLS IN THE
PERFORMANCE-BASED CLASSROOM:
JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

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College of Performing and Visual Arts
School of Theatre Arts and Dance
Theatre Education

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This Thesis by: Kelsey Alys Meiklejohn

Entitled: *Teaching Musical Theatre Skills in the Performance-Based Classroom: James and the Giant Peach*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in College of Performing and Visual Arts in School of Theatre and Dance, Program of Theatre Educator Intensive

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ABSTRACT

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The popularity of musical theatre in America is driving more students to seek out performance opportunities while theatre classrooms are facing dwindling attendance rates. The goal of this thesis is to determine whether it is possible to employ the mounting of a full-scale musical production of *James and the Giant Peach* in a classroom setting to motivate student growth in acting, singing, and dance due to the product-oriented environment. The complex material in the script and score of *James and the Giant Peach* was adequately challenging to necessitate and promote significant student growth as musical theatre performers. Through working on a production of *James and the Giant Peach* in a production-based classroom, students were able to further their skills as musical theatre performers while simultaneously practicing the necessary self-assessment of their work to propel them toward continued growth and development both onstage and in the classroom.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Goal of Thesis

Musical theatre is experiencing a resurgence in America and has risen to a degree of popularity not seen since the Golden Age. When it opened on Broadway in 1943, *Oklahoma!* blew past box office records and established the new paradigm of book musicals, with fully integrated songs and dances. Following the show's success, Broadway musicals experienced a period of unparalleled box office success from 1943–1959 (Simkin). However, audience interest began to wane during the 1960s and 1970s as evidenced by a 4.1 million or forty-three percent drop in ticket sales between 1968 and 1972 (Simkin). The financial ramifications of declining interest in live performance was taking its toll.

The musical theatre industry needed to change to inspire increased theatrical patronage, and expanding media opportunities in television and movies provided an excellent opportunity to reach a broader audience. Starting in 2001 with films such as *Moulin Rouge*, *Chicago*, and *The Phantom of the Opera*, musicals began to be produced as movies in significant numbers for the first time since the Golden Age. Anyone could see a professionally staged musical for the price of a movie ticket. This resurgence of movie musicals continues today with films like *Into the Woods*, *La La Land*, and *The*

Greatest Showman, and the result has been not only increased financial success for the genre but also its incorporation into American pop culture.

The success of the new wave of movie musicals then crossed over to the television market. In 2009, the hit show *Glee* told the story of a high school glee-club through a traditional musical structure, weaving song and dance into the narrative and using them to propel and enhance the plot. The show also relied on well-known musical theatre songs and performers, pleasing fans while simultaneously exposing a new generation to the genre. Appealing strongly to the high school audience, this show is often credited for a surge in music and theatre participation among school students, dubbed “the *Glee* effect” (Chen).

Students flocked to musical theatre classrooms, wanting to emulate their favorite performers on television or in movie musicals. This phenomenon has endured, prompting Jennifer Tepper in her article, “Are We Living in a New Golden Age of Musical Theatre?” to assert that “today’s young people clamor for musical theatre.” In fact, Tepper postulates that we are living in the “Platinum Age” of musical theatre.

The “*Glee* effect” also sparked an additional shift in audiences and students. Although it made musicals “cool” to a new generation, it left them uninformed about the processes behind preparing for a fully realized production. Audiences consistently saw a glamorized version of the rehearsal process where results were immediate and perfection instantaneous. It was not uncommon in *Glee* for Mr. Shuester, the teacher, to begin teaching a brand-new song and the glee club students effortlessly caught on. By the middle of the song, the cast was belting pitch-perfect harmonies and performing a polished, synchronized dance. The lack of realistic rehearsal circumstances left out the

hard work needed for the performances and gave viewers unrealistic expectations about the journey from process to product. Students driven to theatre classes and auditions were used to seeing the polished end product, not the work and rehearsal behind it.

Jennifer Hutchinson captures this challenge in her article “So You Think You Can Glee?” She notes that a common complication of students seeing rehearsals depicted as easy and instantaneous is that it cultivates their own “unrealistic expectations of producing those results immediately, let alone eventually” (18). These product-orientated expectations continue to drive students to theatre programs where they are passionate about the product but resentful of the process. Hutchinson further states that *Glee* “suggests that success . . . is a result of natural talent or giftedness, rather than perseverance” (19). This leaves educators with a conundrum. Students may drop programs that fail to satisfy their desire to perform, yet they also expect that programs will equip them with the skills necessary to find success in performance. This is a difficult balance between process and product to attain in an educational theatre setting: How do educators simultaneously engage students in the skill-building work that is imperative for improvement, while also fulfilling their need to show-off those skills in a full-scale production atmosphere?

The goal of this thesis was to determine whether it was possible to employ the mounting of a full-scale musical production to motivate student growth in acting, singing, and dance due to the product-oriented environment. The culminating project was the performance of *James and the Giant Peach*, staged as part of a production-based class. Presented with a challenging show and facing the realities and time constraints of

mounting a full-scale musical, the hope was that student actors would be compelled to stretch their existing skills, acquire new ones, and gain an appreciation for the process.

Purpose and Significance of Study

In order to ascertain the feasibility of using a production-based classroom to promote enhancing skills, it was important to select a musical that was complex in nature, appropriate for the educational environment, and engaging for the students involved. *James and the Giant Peach* was largely chosen because of the variety and advanced level of musical theatre capabilities required from the performers as well as the ensemble-driven nature of the material. The challenging material demanded progress and development from the students, allowing for in-depth evaluation of this growth throughout the rehearsal and performance process.

Since the show was produced by a youth theatre company, the material needed to match the values and atmosphere of its youth-oriented mission. *James and the Giant Peach* uses a children's story structure to explore deeper questions of self-worth, abuse, how to handle injustices, and what it means to be a family. These mature themes made the material interesting to high school participants. They were able to tackle multifaceted characters and grapple with questions of identity and inequality, all within the context of a show written for a young audience. The show was thus able to meet the dual needs of the program: it appealed to older class participants while remaining appropriate for young audiences.

The significance of the study is far-reaching. Musicals continue to appeal to a wider audience, as demonstrated by the recent pop culture success of *Hamilton* and, to a lesser extent, *Dear Evan Hansen*. At the same time, society remains focused on product-

oriented results and instant gratification. Theatre educators must find ways to lure students back into the classroom, while also fighting the *Glee* effect by training students to understand the labor and discipline that goes into perfecting a performance. This is particularly important given the iterative nature of skill-building and skill application in theatre work. Student actors (1) learn something new, (2) apply it in production, (3) assess what needs to be worked on, and (4) take it back to the classroom and improve those skills for the next production.

To date, minimal research has been done in the area of musical theatre pedagogy and no research speaks to a combined classroom and production atmosphere. This study's primary impact was to address this gap in existing literature, demonstrating the benefit of blending learning and performance opportunities in a theatre for youth context. The model for implementing a production-based musical theatre education program that was developed as part of this study also served as an example for educators seeking to maintain student interest in theatre learning by offering them an end goal that concurrently teaches important skills.

Review of Literature

The research for creating a comprehensive understanding of all elements related to this thesis fell into three categories: (1) musical theatre education, (2) Roald Dahl's novel *James and the Giant Peach*, and (3) the musical adaptation of *James and the Giant Peach*. Musical theatre education research offered insight into the feasibility of engaging students through the performance opportunities and increasing student skills in the rehearsal process but highlighted a lack of pedagogical resources for educators. In order to contextualize the musical knowledge of the source material was necessary. Research

into Dahl's canon, particularly the novel *James and the Giant Peach*, provided a rich background regarding structure and symbolism to be considered in producing a stage adaptation of his work. The research pointed to Dahl's influence from prevalent fairy tale tropes and themes. Finally, resources about the development of the musical and staging techniques utilized therein provided a framework for translating Dahl's imaginative world to the stage. The history of the musical and its development led to a greater understanding of the complex material the students' worked with in production process. By analyzing the musical from these various viewpoints, it was easier to determine areas of growth necessary for performers to successfully meet the demands of the show.

Musical Theatre Education

Existing research in musical theatre education is primarily made up of production guides, audition preparation books, and resources that present an overview of the canon, none of which related directly to the focus of this study. Resources that discuss and further musical theatre pedagogy are lacking in the field, but music educators have begun to investigate the role of the musical as part of the high school experience. Most researchers spend their time touting the social and developmental benefits that musical theater participation provides students as this offers validity for funding and other resources needed for such programs to continue. The predominate research lacks clear insight into the benefits of cultivating students as performers and how this type of growth feeds the social and developmental benefits seen in students who participate in arts programming. Theatre education approaches seek to develop students as both performers and people. Yet, the current research lacks this combined focus present in the instruction methods implemented by theatre educators. Pedagogical methods are interspersed

throughout the research but are never the principal focus of conducted studies.

Interestingly, assessment models for musical theatre have been developed by educators and researchers despite the lack of formal training resources in the field.

The majority of scholarly literature on musical theatre education is from the music education field and addresses musicals from the perspective of the music director. Such is the case with *Musical Theatre in Secondary Education: Teacher Preparation, Responsibilities, and Attitudes* by Debra Jo Davey and *The Musical Theatre Experience and the Extent to which it Affects High School Students*, by Ric Lynn Watkins. Davey's study, which examines the preparation of music educators for work on musicals in high schools, provides insight into the teacher's perspective. Watkins, on the other hand, explores the possibility of recruiting high school musical theatre students into music programs. In doing so, he examines musical theatre participation from the students' perspective. Their complimentary work verifies that musicals remain a popular activity in secondary education and provide a collaborative training ground for young performers.

Although Watkins and Davey both stress the personal and social growth seen in musical theatre participants, they each include some information on student growth in musical theatre skills. Davey quotes teachers who praise the "dramatic and musical growth" (Lee qtd. in Davey 85) of their students and observe that "students are provided with the opportunity of aesthetic growth by receiving experiences in music interpretation, dance, ensemble work, and study in musicianship and appreciation" (Sample qtd. in Davey 94). These accounts demonstrate the potential of students to develop artistic skills through participation in musical theatre productions.

Watkins offers insight into the power of peer influence as a driver of growth and success in the school musical. He observes that the collaborative atmosphere of working on a production creates a unified work ethic where “students feel that they have to do their best because they don’t want to disappoint their friends who are depending on them” (Watkins 13). This sense of obligation to the group fuels a desire in students to develop their musical theatre performance skills. Students’ desire to progress in the art is reflected in their ability to self-assess their strengths and weaknesses, their willingness to learn from others, and their efforts put toward becoming a better performer.

Pedagogy is never addressed in either dissertation. Davey asserts that, given the significance that participation in a high school musical holds for most students, it is logical to expect “the teacher-directors of the project should be experts in the preparation of student performers” (6). However, the dissertation never pinpoints exactly where or how teacher-directors can gain this expertise beyond “how-to” manuals for producing a high school musical. Watkins’ approach, concentrated on quantifying the effects participation in musical theatre has on students, acknowledges the lack of research in the field but does not report on pedagogy.

Some pedagogical advice can be found among research promoting the importance of musical theatre in education. In *The Musical Theatre as a Vehicle for Learning*, by Santiago Pérez-Aldeguer, a musician and researcher at the University of Zaragoza in Spain, he stresses the importance of flexibility in an educational musical theatre program. He asserts that student enjoyment is directly proportional to their level of involvement in the musical and that educators’ flexibility within musical theatre programs allows for curriculum and material to meet students’ interests and needs. Additionally, the ability to

adapt helps educators accommodate for the varying range of skill levels of students participating in the musical. This is particularly true for musical theatre education, as programs in an educational setting are rarely grouped by ability. A theatre educator must create an atmosphere that can challenge students on an individual level, from those with more experience as leads to those with little to no experience in the chorus.

Catherine Dana Snider takes a more direct look at musical theatre pedagogy approaches in her thesis, *Teaching Broadway: Musical Theatre Pedagogy in the Classroom*. Snider advocates for an interdisciplinary approach since musicals are by nature an interdisciplinary art form. She argues the “most effective way to teach musical theatre is with two teachers: one, an acting teacher with very good musical understanding, and the other, a musical director with a sensitivity for the stage” (31). This interdisciplinary methodology emphasizes the necessity of having educators who are experts if the program seeks to create well-rounded performers. Snider demands better for musical theatre students than the “haphazard training for a craft which demands some very specific skills” (37) yet does not offer any pedagogical models.

In order to effectively evaluate a program’s success, educators must measure student growth in musical theatre performance. For that, there must be assessment tools in place. While all assessments of the arts are somewhat subjective, C. Casey Ozaki, Deborah Worley, and Emily Cherry offer a model in their article “Assessing the Work: An Exploration of Assessment in Musical Theatre Arts.” The framework presented addresses musical theatre as a unified art form—as opposed to Snider’s dichotomy—without distinguishing acting, singing, and dancing as individual components. They assert that assessment is integral to cultivating a student-centered program that “promotes

student learning” as well as “how to create an environment that fosters desired learning and its outcomes” (12). The assessment model outlined builds on the work of Richard A. Gale and Lloyd Bond, senior scholars at The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Gale and Bond’s article “Assessing the Art of Craft,” contends that assessment for the arts is not inherently different from traditional academic assessments, it simply comes with more grey areas (126). In order to effectively and fairly assess student understanding, educators must remove aesthetics and natural talent from assessments and instead underscore understanding. Gale and Bond offer a framework for assessing college students’ learning in the creative arts grounded in understanding and knowledge.

Drawing from more traditional academic subjects, their assessment model focuses on four areas to measure student ability and proficiency: knowledge building, creative production, integrative contextualization, and critical communication (Ozaki et al. 14). These four areas address both classroom and performance-based skills, offering a model to assess student growth as a unified musical theatre performer.

Musical theatre educators must find a way to infuse the theatrical process back into a product-oriented society. Structured pedagogy is desperately needed to ground the advancement of students through both class and production work, as the current literature lacks insight into methodology. Although the transferable social skills students gain through musical theatre participation are more lauded in research, the significance of students’ artistic growth must be given equal attention. Such attention would fill the gap in existing research and provide a framework to ensure measurable success in musical theatre thereby helping students achieve the advanced performance experiences they

seek. The research examined suggests that students' personal and artistic progress are tied together in an interdependent relationship. It can therefore be presumed that a complete musical theatre educational experience should similarly emphasize the symbiotic relationship between classroom and production/performance work.

Roald Dahl's James and the Giant Peach

Roald Dahl is the author of the children's novel *James and the Giant Peach*, the source material for the musical presented in this study. He is one of few authors considered to be successful in both adult and children's literature, but it is his work for children that has drawn both the most praise and criticism. Several volumes of the journal *Children's Literature in Education* feature articles examining Dahl and his canon. Two articles published in the journal provide varying interpretations of the author's intent and message in his children's novels. In "Dahl's Chickens" David Rees, a children's author himself, offers a vehement account of his distaste for Dahl's novels for young readers. Mark West, a professor of children's literature at The University of North Carolina and subsequent Dahl biographer, takes a different approach to interpreting Dahl's message by interviewing Dahl himself. This allows the author's voice and thoughts to be shared without being subject to scholarly interpretation or personal taste.

Rees maintains that Dahl's stories center on a moral universe that "seems confused and full of contradictions" (143), and yet quantifies his work as "black and white—two-dimensional and unrealistic" (144). Dahl presents a seemingly clear-cut world where there is no grey area between good and bad and then surprises the reader by presenting ambiguities and exceptions to the rule that they must reconcile. West's interview reveals that these inconsistencies might not be purposeful, citing that *James*

and the Giant Peach was weaved together from the stories Dahl would invent for his children at bedtime.

Rees is quick to point out that the choppy nature of the book's plot detracts from its prominence as a masterful exhibition of Dahl's signature specificity and "imaginative absurdity of a high order" (151). In his discussion with West, Dahl admits "a terrible fear of boring the reader" (65), which leads to the many detailed, bizarre, and fantastical moments in his books. Finally, Reese argues that Dahl plays too much to the children among his readers, but West's interview makes clear that appealing to a child's imagination and interest is the author's goal.

In order to appeal to children, Dahl's unique style draws on stock themes and characters from classic fairy tales, manipulating them into modern narratives that take place in unique worlds where children have power. Margaret Talbot explores Dahl's enduring appeal to children in her *New Yorker* article "The Candy Man." Talbot credits his cannon's allure to his understanding and upending of classic fairy tale tropes:

. . . the essence of Dahl is his willingness to let children triumph over adults. He is a modern writer of fairy tales, who intuitively understands the sort of argument that Bruno Bettelheim made in his 1976 book, "The Uses of Enchantment." Children need the dark materials of fairy tales because they need to make sense—in a symbolic, displaced way—of their own feelings of anger, resentment, and powerlessness. (Talbot)

This understanding that children should not be shielded from darker elements pervades his work and is part of what makes it so distinctive.

The article "Deconstructing the Peach: James and the Giant Peach as a Post-Modern Fairy Tale" explores Dahl's style using his first children's novel *James and the Giant Peach* as the primary example. Eve Tal argues that, while Dahl makes use of a traditional fairy tale framework that is complete with magic and suspension of disbelief,

his world in *James* then “turns against itself to reverse the reader’s expectations and evoke a second, more sinister, interpretation” (267). The story relies on a magical helper who assists James in his journey from pushover to leader but distorts the fairy tale model by painting the helper as a nasty-looking man. This makes readers question if the character is truly there to assist the story’s hero.

Additionally, Tal contends that the linear journey James is forced to take prevents the traditional fairy tale closure of the hero returning from a journey having discovered something new. James’s story carries him from a miserable living situation with his aunts to having to live in a makeshift home in the peach. Tal leaves readers with a bleak interpretation of the ending in which James, a young child, ends up “living alone inside a peach pit, inside a park, in one of the largest most frightening cities in the world. . . instead of love he has fame” (274). With the final reveal of James as the narrator of the story, Tal suggests that Dahl intended to confront readers with the realities of an old man reduced to recounting stories, rather than a lively youth riled up from his adventures as seen in traditional fairy tales.

Throughout his cannon, Dahl employs classic children’s literature themes and symbols in addition to his reliance on fairy tale structures. Much like his tinkering with fairy tale structures, his manipulation of these themes forces readers to reexamine what they assumed to be true by placing them in a new context. The majority of the research surrounding Dahl’s children’s books, specifically his novel *James and the Giant Peach*, seek to further analyze his distinctive use of classic tropes including the narrator, the orphan, escape, punishment of the wicked, and home.

The narrator is of particular importance in Dahl's canon, serving as a trustworthy guide leading the reader through the outlandish events of the plot. In the article "The Narrative Voice in Roald Dahl's Children's and Adult Books," Laura Viñas Valle presents an in-depth analysis of Dahl's narrators. Valle asserts that in Dahl's children's books the narrators are "intrusive, all-knowing, and overtly in control of the narrative" (293). The narrator's voice in Dahl's work serves to guide young readers through the story while simultaneously providing commentary and coloring their views of events and character. The propensity of Dahl's narrators to present opinions as fact affects how readers discern good from bad in his novels. Additionally, the narrators are biased and side with the protagonist of the story, furthering their ability to propel their story forward. This bias mimics the role of narrators in traditional fairy tales and folk tales where the narrator is a "sort of companion figure" (Cullen qtd. in Tal 265) and therefore telling the story in favor of the hero.

In *James and the Giant Peach*, the narrator is later revealed to be the grown-up version of the story's hero, James. Dahl has taken the bias of the fairy tale narrator to the extreme by making him one in the same with the hero. In doing so, he acknowledges the bias and is able to present all of James' story through the eyes of the child who lived the adventures. Dahl demonstrates his skill at playing on traditional structures by saving the revelation of James being the unnamed narrator for the end of the story, making readers reconsider the reliability of a narrator who until the end seemed like an omniscient observer (Tal 271).

In Dahl's work, the narrator's control strengthens when the plot centers around an orphan. The orphan archetype plays an important part in Dahl's deconstruction of the

traditional fairy tale as shown in James' story. In "From Folktales to Fiction: Orphan Characters in Children's Literature," Melanie Kimball equates the control to a sense of fate. Kimball claims that this derives from children's literature's roots in folktales where "no hero or heroine is completely in charge of his or her own destiny but is assisted at precisely the right time by human or supernatural helpers" (562). Such is the case with James when he meets the Old Man who helps him concoct the slithering crocodile tongues potion that makes the peach grow, finds a tunnel in the peach, and befriends giant insects.

Kimball notes that orphans evoke an immediate sense of empathy in readers, providing a hook into the story and saving authors from verbose introductions. James Michael Curtis draws the same conclusion in his dissertation, *In Absentia Parentis: The Orphan Figure in Latter Twentieth Century Anglo-American Children's Fantasy*. Curtis believes that orphans present a paradox to readers as they are at once "inherently tragic" (19) and "an incomparable source of optimism" (20). The dissertation then considers the toll that this dual reality, of being both tragic and hopeful, takes on orphan characters in the narrative. Particularly in regard to James, Curtis draws on other researchers' work, noting the psychological implications of split personalities and regression present in the novel. Curtis pulls this theory from literary critic Mark West's writings which use a Freudian framework to explore how James "first regresses, diving his inner personality into many giant bugs. . . and then how he reassembles a coherent sense of self by the novel's end" (Curtis 35).

Curtis further asserts that it is only through this regression that James is able to shed the tragic implications of being an orphan, complete his journey from victim to hero,

and truly embrace the new home he has found with the insects. James' relationship with the insects is the "most immediate benefit" (57) of his regression. Dahl also makes use of the fairy tale convention of magic to create this new family for James to "enable his focalizing characters to work through certain psycho-developmental tasks (i.e., separation anxiety)" (58). James' loss of his parents fuels his regression but additionally allows him to build a familial relationship with the insects, in turn leading him to discover his independence.

Home is a vital representation of stability and maturity for orphans and a recurring symbol in much of Dahl's novels. In a review of Pauline Dewan's book, *The House as Setting, Symbol, and Structural Motif in Children's Literature*, Susan Maher draws attention to the complexities posed by the idea of "home." The contextual implications are wide-ranging, including facets of character's origins, social roles, development, and experiences of justice or injustice. For Dewan, home is most importantly "a child's first universe" (qtd. in Maher 287). Dewan's book alleges that all children's literature begins with the idea of home and how that environment is either serving or hindering the protagonist's development.

Considering exploration as the opposite of home, Maher explains Dewan's idea that "home also remains in creative tension with a protagonist's need to grow, change, and individuate" (288). Dahl again turns to fairy tale conventions to overcome this tension, making a character's home unwelcoming to them and the place they are trying to escape. This is particularly evident in *James and the Giant Peach*, where James' home is with aunts who routinely abuse him. These injustices propel him on his journey which culminates in the establishment of a new home in the peach pit in New York City. In

James and the Giant Peach, home symbolizes a safe space as well as the completion of James' personal development from a passive participant in his life to choosing his own path.

In order for his protagonists to have space for growth and change, Dahl enables them to escape their undesirable circumstances. Typical fairy tale structures have the children experiencing a full-circle pattern of growth, returning home changed by their journey. As stated before, Dahl's heroes follow a more linear voyage by escaping the circumstances of a "not home" setting in order to find their true family and home (Tal 273). This is especially applicable to James, who by luck of fate escapes in the peach despite "never attempting escape from his hilltop prison" (265). Although James' escape is accidental, it is necessary for his maturation and development of heroic qualities including leadership, bravery, and intelligence (266).

Since Dahl employs this linear structure, he includes over-the-top evil characters that serve to drive his protagonists away from their perceived home. His villains "belong to the folk tale tradition of wicked (step)mothers" (Tal 266) and are justly punished over the course of Dahl's stories for their wrong-doings. Dahl utilizes his narrator's biased descriptions to quickly delineate good from bad primarily based on appearance. In his novels "physical ugliness signifies its moral equivalent" (Talbot). He additionally employs the mistreatment of his heroes to further appeal to young readers who "are presumably not mistreated, and yet they intuitively understand that the beatings and humiliations meted out to his young characters are metaphors for the powerlessness of being a child" (Talbot). In *James and the Giant Peach*, Spiker and Sponge are served their just desserts and "punished with death when the peach crushed them" (Tal 266).

The literature surrounding Roald Dahl's stories describes his distinctive style as a modern-day fairy tale. Dahl puts his own twist on typical fairy tale tropes, including the narrator, the orphan, escape, and punishment of the wicked, and uses them to create imaginative worlds where children are heroes who gain power and self-reliance. The research concurs that these themes have ensured that his work has an enduring appeal to children. As a result, *James and the Giant Peach* has remained a favorite among young readers, making it the perfect material for translation into a musical for young audiences.

*James and the Giant Peach:
The Musical*

Dahl's children's novels have been adapted into musicals for both the screen and the stage. The film adaptations of *Willy Wonka* and *James and the Giant Peach* are perhaps the most well-known. Musical stage adaptations of Dahl's work include the recent *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Matilda*, *The Fantastic Mr. Fox*, and *Willy Wonka*. In fact, *Willy Wonka* features a libretto by Tim McDonald who also wrote the book for the *James and the Giant Peach* musical.

History about the development of the musical adaptation of *James and the Giant Peach*, as well as information about past productions, helps create a thorough understanding for staging the material. Since the musical never moved to Broadway, the research is limited in scope and mostly consists of reviews of various productions and interviews with the artistic team. These sources paint a fairly comprehensive picture of the show's development. Author notes and a student guide from the program of the original workshop production at Goodspeed Theatre provide insight into the tone and goals of the original draft of the show. This production was fully-staged with pared down

technical elements, allowing the creative team to focus on the book, music, and structure of the show (McDonald and Daniele).

The original book for the musical latched onto the darkness associated with Dahl's work and sought to adjust the story to appeal to adult audiences. McDonald admits, "we wrote some pretty scary stuff. . . It was too dark, too weird, too cold" (Music Theatre International). Adding to the weirdness of the production was the collaboration with the dance company Pilobolus as a solution to staging the more fantastical moments of the story. A review by Chris Caggaino concludes this collaboration contributed to the overall mediocrity of the production as the "moments of imaginative synthesis" were underutilized.

A blog managed by Abra Chusid captured quotes of audience members from the Kennedy Center workshop production at the New Visions/New Voices Festival and provides the only published insight into significant revisions that occurred following the Goodspeed production. This workshop reading ultimately moved the show into the genre of theatre for youth. By embracing the story's appeal to younger audience members, it featured an increased focus on the "magic of the moment" (Gonzalez qtd. in Chusid).

Reviews from the Seattle Children's Theatre world premiere reveal the addition of puppetry and other theatre conventions which proved key to successfully transitioning Dahl's imaginative world to the stage. An interview with Pasek and Paul describes the new tone of the show as finding the "lightness in the dark" (Pasek qtd. in Ouzounian). This approach was a hit with audiences and critics alike and the villains, Spiker and Sponge, were praised for being "riotously likeable" (Graves). Focusing the show on themes of home and exploration combined with a more family-friendly tone helped

“draw the audience. . . into the magical story” (Sutcliffe). The reviews overwhelming confirm that these additions turned the show from a dark and scary retelling meant to appeal to adults to an engaging, magically upbeat sensation for children. This research on past productions provided background into both unsuccessful and successful approaches to producing the musical, thus helping to guide decisions regarding the tone and design of a production.

Methodology

This production of *James and the Giant Peach* featured students as performers but had a mix of students and paid professional staff on the production and design teams. The students involved as actors were the focus of the study, as it concerned engaging students in musical theatre skill-building through participation in a production-based classroom. Research began with auditions, where participant’s skills were assessed using a rubric, and continued through the rehearsal and performance process.

In order to participate in the production, students were enrolled in the tuition-based program Musical Theatre Intensive (MTI). MTI is a pre-professional production-based class offered by Encore Stage & Studio (Encore). Founded in 1967, Encore is a youth theatre based in Arlington, Virginia with the tagline “theatre by kids, for kids.” As students learn and grow with the organization, they are encouraged to take ownership of their work. At MTI this ownership included personal responsibility, artistic growth, and actively engaging with their role in the production. As of the development of this thesis, MTI was Encore’s only pre-professional program, run by teaching artists with extensive experience in the professional market including New York, regional and touring productions, and the local Washington, DC area.

MTI was open to students in high school and a select pool of eighth graders by invitation only. The class enrolled twelve students, and numbers were purposely limited to guarantee personal attention to the students and a sizable role in the production for every participant. The majority of the MTI participants were students with previous experience in theatre and a high level of interest in pursuing theatre arts in college and professionally.

Prior to the audition process, students were encouraged to consider their current abilities and where those fit within the production. Actors then participated in a dialogue with instructors about previous theatre experience, the status of their development as musical theatre performers, and their goals. For auditions, another discussion encouraged actors to openly contemplate characters they would be interested in playing and how those aligned with their existing skill set or helped them reach a personal goal. They were coached in choosing appropriate audition material based on the script and score of *James and the Giant Peach*.

During the audition, students were evaluated on their abilities in the three primary areas of musical theatre: acting, singing, and dancing. Casting considerations included not only which actors were best suited to specific roles, but also which roles would provide adequate room for student growth as performers while still being achievable within the rehearsal period. Each actor was cast in a role that matched their ability level but also provided some room for growth for them as a performer, whether learning to harmonize, tackling the basics of dance, or creating a character different from others they have portrayed before.

Once the rehearsal period was underway, a professional rehearsal model was employed. This included creating a collaborative ensemble-driven environment where actors were responsible for generating and presenting ideas for staging, characterizations, and motivations. There were a few exceptions and deviations from a typical rehearsal process in order to integrate educational and skill-building opportunities. These included ensemble-building exercises done with the whole cast at the beginning of each rehearsal and coaching moments regarding vocal techniques, breakdowns of dance steps, and character objective analysis in scenes. These deviations were not scheduled, but instead, taken when students were not sufficiently meeting the demands of the show. The freedom to weave in classroom work when necessary allowed an individualized approach to both solo and group work on *James and the Giant Peach*, one which was centered on student progress and understanding.

Students' growth was measured using a rubric four times during the class: at auditions, halfway through rehearsals, before entering tech week, and following performances. The rubric measured performance separately in each of the three aspects of musical theatre: acting, singing, and dancing. Distinguishing between the three areas allowed scores to be reflective of discrete abilities and not weighted on pre-existing abilities in one area. Rubric scores ranged from one to five, with one being the lowest (student did not meet any benchmarks of aptitude) and five being the highest (student met all benchmarks for performance). The benchmarks focused on measurable performance goals such as clear character motivation, accuracy with matching pitches and harmonies, and precision of dance movements and sequencing.

Notes and observations of students' progress were kept during the entirety of the process. These notes focused on character discussions, marked improvements made between rehearsals, student discoveries, and challenges students faced with the material. The observations allowed for further insight into the rate of student progress as well as its variance throughout the extended rehearsal process. The collected notes created context for student growth markers both as a whole ensemble and as individual performers.

All actors also filled out exit tickets at the conclusion of each rehearsal. These exit tickets asked open-ended questions of students to attain self-assessment of progress, their goals for improvement, their understanding, and any questions they had regarding the material or techniques. In addition, it offered free space for students to share any additional information they liked.

A post-performance evaluation was given anonymously to students who participated in the study. It utilized a point scale, with one being strongly disagree and six being strongly agree, to measure student engagement and growth over the rehearsal and production process. Students were also encouraged in their responses to explain and reflect on their point selection. Ratings were gathered to assess the effectiveness of rehearsal techniques in aiding character development, actors' feelings regarding their contribution to decisions in the performance, whether actors felt adequately challenged by the material, and their sense of improvement through the process. The evaluations revealed information about student growth as performers overall, show-specific insights regarding their characters, and their investment in the rehearsal and performance process.

The final production was supported by an adult production staff consisting of part-time and independent contractors from Encore. The production staff handled all

design work including sets, lights, costumes, properties, music direction, choreography, and direction. A student stage manager supervised a student crew who were hand-picked to participate based on their previous work on other crew assignments at Encore.

Puppetry played a large role in the production. While it was originally conceived that a puppeteer would be hired to build all puppets for the production as well as lead a workshop regarding their use, the budget was insufficient to cover the costs. Instead, the insect puppets were purchased from a designer on Etsy, a specialty craft website. The properties designer undertook the task of making all the other puppets, including the rhinoceros and peach.

A live band consisting of keyboard, bass, and violin presented a unique opportunity for the actors, as all other musicals in the season were performed with pre-recorded tracks. Live music is not always available to educational theatres due to budget and rehearsal limitations. Working with a band thus added another skill to student actors' repertoires as musical theatre artists. The band members were also independent contractors hired by Encore.

Ultimately, the focus of the study centered on the work happening during rehearsal with the actors. The objective of the research was establishing an effective blend of skill acquisition in areas of acting, singing, and dance through rehearsals for a production. Throughout the process, the study measured student growth as well-rounded musical theatre performers and their engagement with the material. This study determined that participation in an integrated performance-based classroom resulted in significant student growth as musical theatre performers motivated by their participation in a full-scale musical.

CHAPTER II

DRAMATURGICAL PROTOCOL

Glossed Playscript

All references below refer to Music Theatre International's publication of Tim McDonald's *James and the Giant Peach*.

First Responses

Pluses

- 1) The musical features a large cast, which opens up opportunities for potential doubling. This approach gives one actor the chance to play multiple parts as well as helps keep the cast size small if necessary.
- 2) The content is perfect for a theatre for youth or a theatre for young audiences' production. The story, based on Roald Dahl's novel, is very popular with children, which is helpful in marketing the show.
- 3) The script uses narration to include the audience in the conceit of telling a story. This technique particularly helps to draw younger audience members into the world of the play and encourages them to suspend their disbelief.
- 4) The use of puppetry presents an opportunity for actors to learn a valuable new skill.

- 5) Alternate keys are provided for James' songs depending on whether the actor's voice has changed. This allows the director freedom to cast the perfect actor for the role regardless of age or vocal part.
- 6) Instead of only being frightening, the villains are written comically with a slight edge of evilness.
- 7) Magic helps to drive the story forward and keep the audience engaged.
- 8) The music is complex enough for students to develop and grow without it being beyond their capabilities.
- 9) Despite being a family friendly show, there are some tough subjects addressed. James experiences loss, loneliness, and bullying before finding his place in the world.
- 10) The musical's message is particularly relevant to students as they mature. It advocates a perception of family that includes not just the one they are born into, but the larger community of influential people that make them who they are.
- 11) Many technical elements must be imaginatively envisioned, including the growing peach. Imagination offers an opportunity to take risks and try something outside the box in order to create the fantastical world of the musical.

Minuses

- 1) The musical is written for a large, live orchestra, which is difficult under the limited financial and space resources of a theatre for youth. A possible solution is to use prerecorded tracks, yet they inhibit a reactive, "in the moment" performance from actors.
- 2) Five-part harmony is difficult for some performers.

- 3) The meta-theatricality of the first number is not carried throughout the musical, as it ends after the opening number.
- 4) In order for the puppetry to be effective, actors need additional rehearsal time dedicated to learning the skill.
- 5) There is an abrupt tonal shift from an exciting upbeat first number to James' loss, loneliness, and abuse. This solemn tone continues until the middle of the first act and slows the action down.
- 6) The slithering crocodile tongues magic spell must be concocted in front of the audience and appear to both glow and slither across the stage, requiring special effects.
- 7) The peach must grow in front of the audience and, once grown, accommodate actors outside, inside, and on top.
- 8) The script features more male characters than female. In addition, the majority of the leads are male characters.
- 9) James saves Centipede when the peach is flying, but the lines refer to an underwater rescue, which needs justification.

Questions

- 1) Why is Ladahlord the narrator of James' story?
- 2) Is James himself in the opening number or an actor who then takes on the part of James? Is he complicit in telling his own story?
- 3) Are all of the actors taking on parts in James' story or are they simply an ensemble telling the story while the characters are themselves?

- 4) Are Spiker and Sponge James' mother's or father's sisters, or are they distant relatives; perhaps great-aunts twice removed?
- 5) Why does James inherently trust Ladahlord, a stranger?
- 6) Why does James continue to be helpful to his aunts despite how they treat him?
Why does he instinctively call for them when he is stuck in the peach?
- 7) Why does James go inside the peach?
- 8) What brings the other insects to see the good in James, after everything humans have done to them? Why do they not react like Centipede?
- 9) How high is the peach when it flies and when Centipede falls off? Is it just enough to save them from the sharks or are they actually in the clouds? Or is it at different heights to accommodate both Centipede's rescue and the Empire State Building landing?
- 10) When did Grasshopper and Ladybug's love begin to develop? Was it before they met James or because of their shared circumstances and interactions with James?
- 11) Must James be played by a boy? With appropriate permissions granted, could it be played as a girl without altering the story?

Clues

- 1) The meta-theatre aspect becomes important to setting up the world of the play. As explained in "Right Before Your Eyes," the story is not possible without James encountering magic.
- 2) The opening number also reveals the darker moments of the musical.

- 3) The resemblance of Grasshopper and Ladybug to Mr. and Mrs. Trotter is revealed early on through costuming and the items James' parents left behind (horned rimmed glasses and a polka dot scarf).
- 4) James does not think of his aunts as family when asked about them by Ladahlord. This realization is pivotal to Ladahlord deciding to give James the magic potion that leads to his journey.
- 5) Ladahlord both foresees and controls James' fate as an omnipotent narrator.
- 6) Centipede and James have more similarities than differences, yet they handle the cards life dealt them differently. James appears unsure of where he belongs in the world but is eager to find it, whereas Centipede sees the worst in the world.
- 7) The audience must believe that the peach kills Spiker and Sponge when it rolls over them in the first act in order for the joke of their reappearance to play at the top of act two.
- 8) The insects must come down from the Empire State Building at some point because they are on the ground when Spiker and Sponge are killed by the falling peach.

Imagery

- 1) James' rhinoceros nightmare is representative of death and loss.
- 2) The horn-rimmed glasses and polka dot scarf are the only remaining mementos of James' parents and the only things he packs when he leaves the orphanage.
- 3) Family and home are reoccurring images.

- 4) Money and other valuables are mentioned throughout the song “Property of Spiker and Sponge,” and in the number “Money On That Tree,” which presents the image of money growing on trees.
- 5) Insects appear or are mentioned in every scene: lice, grasshopper, ladybug, spider, creepy-crawlies, earthworm, centipede, glowworm, etc.
- 6) James as his aunts’ human property creates a vivid image.
- 7) The seashore and beach represent freedom, friends, and James’ past home.
- 8) The peach tree and giant peach are prevalent images throughout the musical.
- 9) The sea, ocean, and sky represent adventure.

Concretes

- 1) The death of James’ parents changed his world forever.
- 2) The actors in the musical must believe that the story they tell is true and not a work of fiction.
- 3) James feels trapped and has no agency with his aunts.
- 4) James’ aunts are terrible human beings, otherwise James’ response to their death would make him equally horrible.
- 5) If James’ aunts were his true family, his journey would not be necessary. He makes the choice to change his fate, and Ladahlord facilitates it.
- 6) Magic is real and spells work. Insects can become human and peaches can grow to astonishing sizes.
- 7) The peach must appear to grow, roll, float, fly with seagulls carrying it, and land on the Empire State Building.

Supplements to the Playscript/ Areas of Inquiry

Source Studies

McDonald's musical is an adaptation of Roald Dahl's famous children's book *James and the Giant Peach*. Originally a writer of short stories for adults, *James and the Giant Peach* was Dahl's first foray into children's novels ("James and the Giant Peach," *Roald Dahl*). Despite being a critical success, the novel has been subject to scrutiny for its dark themes and material deemed inappropriate for young children. For these reasons and more the book has consistently been brought up for review and the American Library Association includes it in their "Frequently Challenged Children's Books" list (Peters).

The musical makes few changes to Dahl's storyline and tone. It omits the Cloud Men entirely and moves Aunts Spiker and Sponge's deaths to the dénouement, which gives the story antagonists until the end. However, the core of the narrative remains the same and direct quotes from the novel are interspersed throughout the musical. Dahl's original tale includes songs, most often sung by Centipede in fits of jubilation, so a musical adaptation is fitting to bring Dahl's story to the stage.

Glossary

Each word defined below is designated by page number. All page numbers refer to Music Theatre International's *James and the Giant Peach*, by Tim McDonald, with music and lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul. Unless otherwise noted definitions are from *Merriam-Webster*.

- 5 *Matron*: a woman who supervises women or children
- 10 *Pendant*: a piece of jewelry that hangs on a chain or a cord which is worn around your neck

- 10 *Pounds*: the basic monetary unit of the United Kingdom, called also pound sterling
- 11 *Quid*: a pound sterling
- 11 *Queer*: differing in some odd way from what is usual or normal
- 12 *Telegram*: a message that is sent by telegraph, an old-fashioned system of sending messages over long distances by using wires and electrical signals
- 12 *Mate*: chum, friend, British speakers often use mate as a familiar form of address
- 13 *Helper-monkey*: a small monkey used to aid a disabled person, they are very well trained and perform such tasks as fetching food, turning lights on and off, and retrieving assorted small objects (*Definithing*)
- 14 *Huzzah*: an expression or shout of acclaim—often used interjectionally to express joy or approbation
- 16 *Creepy-crawlies*: an unpleasant worm, insect, or spider
- 17 *Smart*: stylish or elegant in dress or appearance
- 18 *Vermin*: small insects and animals, such as fleas or mice, that are sometimes harmful to plants or other animals and that are difficult to get rid of
- 18 *Frigidaire*: used for an electric refrigerator
- 18 *Chocked full*: full to the limit
- 19 *Bathing costumes*: a garment worn for swimming
- 19 *Gawking*: to gape or stare stupidly
- 23 *Primordial*: existing in or persisting from the beginning, first created or developed
- 23 *Fan-tas-ma-rific*: a word of Ladahlord’s own creation most likely combining fantastic (marked by extravagant fantasy or extreme individuality), amazing

(causing amazement, great wonder, or surprise), and terrific (exciting or fit to excite fear or awe)

- 23 *Remark-u-lous*: a word of Ladahlord's own creation most likely combining remarkable (worthy of being or likely to be noticed especially as being uncommon or extraordinary) and miraculous (working or able to work miracles)
- 24 *Splen-dif-erous*: splendid, marvelous, it is an old word that was first used more than five hundred years ago (Rennie)
- 24 *Spec-magical*: a word of Ladahlord's own creation most likely combining spectacular (of, or relating to, or being a spectacle) and magical (having seemingly supernatural qualities or powers, giving a feeling of enchantment)
- 25 *Brim*: to be or become full often to overflowing
- 25 *Connoisseur*: expert, one who understands the details, technique, or principles of an art and is competent to act as a critical judge
- 26 *Milkweed*: any of a genus of erect chiefly perennial herbs with milky juice and umbellate flowers
- 26 *Osaki*: flower also known as an anthurium, any of a genus of tropical American plants of the arum family with large often brightly colored leaves, a cylindrical spadix, and a colored spathe
- 26 *Marrow*: the substance of the spinal cord
- 26 *Sloppy Joe*: ground beef cooked in a thick spicy sauce and usually served on a bun
- 28 *Fowl*: a bird of any kind
- 30 *Patootie*: a person's or animal's buttocks (*Oxford Dictionaries*)

- 33 *Roll on up*: to arrive in a vehicle
- 33 *Shilling*: a former monetary unit of the United Kingdom equal to twelve pence or one twentieth of a pound
- 34 *Exclusives*: a news story at first released to or reported by only one source
- 34 *Cachet*: a characteristic feature or quality conferring prestige
- 34 *Exposé*: a news report or broadcast that reveals something illegal or dishonest to the public
- 34 *Keynote speech*: the main speech given at a gathering, such as a political convention
- 35 *Green-lit*: authority or permission to proceed
- 35 *Pitch*: to present a movie or program idea for consideration, as by a TV producer
- 35 *Shoot*: to record something, as on film or videotape, with a camera
- 35 *Air*: to transmit by radio or television
- 35 *Pic*: motion picture
- 36 *Lumpish*: tediously slow or dull
- 36 *Debased*: to lower in status, esteem, quality, or character
- 36 *Make a mint*: idiom meaning to make a lot of money (*UsingEnglish.com*)
- 37 *Gajillionaires*: a made-up word, most likely a colloquial version of gazillionaire meaning a rich person who has a very large number of money
- 43 *Peckish*: slightly hungry
- 45 *Daft*: silly, foolish

- 48 *Ridic-u-matically*: a word of Ladahlord's own creation most likely combining ridiculous (very silly or unreasonable) and problematically (posing a problem, difficult to solve or decide)
- 48 *Terror-icfic-ly*: a word of Ladahlord's own creation most likely combining terror (a state of intense fear) and magnifically (magnificent, imposing in size or dignity)
- 48 *Oompa Loompa*: people originally from Loompaland who work in Willy Wonka's chocolate factory in exchange for chocolate, which is their favorite food, they love music and dancing and often make up songs to sing (Rennie)
- 51 *Channel*: a strait or narrow sea between two close landmasses
- 51 *Tally-ho*: a call of a huntsman at sight of the fox
- 52 *Rudder*: an underwater blade that is positioned at the stern of a boat or ship and controlled by its helm and that when turned causes the vessel's head to turn in the same direction
- 52 *Dreg*: a creature invented by Roald Dahl, in the musical *Earthworm* describes it as weighing ten tons and having fangs on its feet
- 52 *Scromp*: a creature invented by Roald Dahl, in the musical *Centipede* describes it as hairy with a scary scream
- 53 *Scrunch*: a creature invented by Roald Dahl, the Pink-Spotted Scrunch is a dangerous man-eating creature with a deadly bite and a huge appetite (Rennie)
- 53 *Bloomers*: underpants designed like full loose trousers gathered at the knee
- 56 *Landmark*: an object (such as a stone or tree) that marks the boundary of land
- 56 *Jaunt*: a usually short journey or excursion undertaken especially for pleasure

- 56 *Parasol*: a lightweight umbrella used as a sunshade
- 57 *Ration*: a food allowance for one day
- 57 *Decorum*: propriety and good taste in conduct or appearance
- 57 *Bon appetit*: enjoy your meal
- 58 *Short-horned grasshopper*: any of a family (Acrididae) of grasshoppers with short antennae
- 58 *Class*: a major category in biological taxonomy ranking above the order and below phylum or division
- 58 *Insecta*: a class of Anthropoda comprising segmented animals that as adults have a well-defined head bearing a single pair of antennae, three pairs of mouthparts, and usually a pair of compound eyes, a three-segmented thorax each segment of which bears a pair of legs ventrally with the second and third often bearing also a pair of wings, and an abdomen usually of seven to ten visible segments modified or fitted with specialized extensions (as claspers, stingers, or ovipositors), that breathe air usually through a ramifying system of tracheae which open externally through spiracles or gills, that exhibit a variety of life cycles often involving complex metamorphosis, and that include the greater part of all living and extinct animals
- 58 *Order*: a category of taxonomic classification ranking above the family and below the class
- 58 *Orthoptera*: insects that are orthopterans or characterized by biting mouthparts, two pairs of wings or none, enlarged hind femurs, and an incomplete metamorphosis

- 58 *Suborder*: a taxonomic category ranking between an order and a family
- 58 *Caelifera*: suborder of grasshoppers whose antennae have fewer than thirty segments (*Encyclopedia.com*)
- 60 *Bloomin'*: used as a generalized intensive
- 60 *Homosape*: shortened version of Homo sapien, meaning humankind
- 60 *Twangs*: an act of plucking a string like that of a banjo
- 62 *Catamaran*: a vessel, as a sailboat, with twin hulls and usually a deck or superstructure connecting the hulls
- 64 *Bloody*: sometimes vulgar, used as an intensive
- 64 *Oodles*: a great quantity
- 65 *Twit*: a silly annoying person
- 66 *Lard*: a soft white solid or semisolid fat obtained by rendering fatty pork
- 67 *Sayonara*: Japanese for good-bye
- 69 *Pinch*: a crucial juncture
- 70 *Larvae*: the immature, wingless, and often wormlike feeding form that hatches from the egg of many insects, alters chiefly in size while passing through several molts, and is finally transformed into a pupa or chrysalis from which the adult emerges
- 70 *Wee*: very small
- 71 *Iridescent*: having or exhibiting a lustrous rainbow-like play of color caused by differential refraction of light waves (as from an oil slick, soap bubble, or fish scales) that tends to change as the angle of view changes

- 71 *Jewel beetles*: any of various usually brightly colored beetles of the family Buprestidae
- 71 *Racket*: an easy and lucrative means of livelihood
- 71 *Fumigated*: to apply smoke, vapor, or gas to especially for the purpose of disinfecting or destroying pests
- 71 *Raid*: play on words using two meanings: 1) a hostile or predatory incursion, 2) popular brand of insecticide
- 71 *Pests*: plants or animals detrimental to humans or human concerns, also one that pesters or annoys
- 72 *Snobs*: ones who tend to rebuff, avoid, or ignore those regarded as inferior, or ones who have an offensive air of superiority in matters of knowledge or taste
- 75 *Transatlantic*: related to or involving crossing the Atlantic Ocean
- 75 *Double fizzy*: a drink with many small bubbles, of a size that is twice as big as usual
- 75 *Nibbly*: suitable for nibbling (*Oxford Dictionaries*)
- 75 *Continental*: of or relating to the continent of Europe excluding the British Isles
- 76 *Peaches and creams*: a situation, process, etc., that has no trouble or problems
- 76 *Paparazzi*: a freelance photographer who aggressively pursues celebrities for the purpose of taking candid photographs
- 76 *Yacht*: a large usually motor-driven craft used for pleasure cruising
- 77 *Manure*: refuse of stables and barnyards consisting of livestock excreta with or without litter

- 78 *Schtick*: a usually comic or repetitious performance or routine, one's special trait, interest, or activity
- 82 *Aeroplane*: British for airplane
- 83 *Bait*: something (such as food) used in luring especially to a hook or trap
- 87 *Bootylicious*: sexually attractive (*Oxford Dictionaries*)
- 87 *Que bonita*: Spanish for that beautiful (*Spanish Central*)
- 87 *Papacita*: Earthworm's manipulation of the Spanish term "mamacita," which means mama or colloquially gorgeous, to make it male (*Oxford Dictionaries*)
- 87 *Ven conmigo*: Spanish for come with me (*Spanish Central*)
- 87 *Mami*: Spanish for Mommy (*Spanish Central*)
- 88 *Remark-u-lous-ly*: adverb form of the word of Ladahlord's own creation most likely combining remarkable (worthy of being or likely to be noticed especially as being uncommon or extraordinary) and miraculous (working or able to work miracles)
- 94 *Spire*: the upper tapering part of something
- 98 *Activist*: someone who follows a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue

Geographical References and Place Names

"Ladahlord places a sign onto the stage reading 'Painswick Orphanage'" (McDonald 3).

"Painswick Orphanage/London, England" (4).

KARL KREATOUR. "Look out! It's a rhino! Escaped from the London Zoo" (4)!

MATRON NURSE. "You've got two aunts. They live in Dover" (8).

JAMES. “Dover? But, that’s where I lived with my Mum and Dad—” (8).

MATRON NURSE. “We’re gonna have to ’urry if we’re gonna make the train to Dover”

(8).

“Ladahlord enters carrying a sign reading ‘A Boardwalk, Dover, England’” (9).

SPIKER. “How can we be of help to such a handsome representative of Scotland Yard”

(12)?

“Ladahlord enters and places a sign reading ‘Dover Priory Train Station’” (13).

JAMES. “A helicopter just landed! They say they’re from Hollywood” (35)!

SPONGE. “Hollywood” (35)?

BUZZ. “They’re gonna flip on the sunset strip” (35)!

BUZZ. “Baby everything you’ve heard is true/Life is marvelous in Malibu” (36).

LADAHLORD. “The peach reached the chalky cliffs of Dover” (48)!

LADYBUG. “Definitely France! The peach must have rolled over the cliffs of Dover.

The lovely French city of Calais is barely twenty miles away” (51)!

CENTIPEDE. “This peach ain’t never gonna make it all the way to France” (51).

EARTHWORM. “We’ll never make it to France” (51)!

GRASSHOPPER. “Now, all we’ve got to do is make some sails, fix a rudder and we’ll

be across the English Channel in no time at all” (52)!

EARTHWORM. “This peach will never make it to France” (52)!

GRASSHOPPER. “Then we must still be in the middle of the English Channel” (56).

EARTHWORM. “A jaunt to France is one thing, but an oceanic journey” (56)?

SPONGE. “Ta-Ta Scotland Yard” (66)!

SPONGE. “A first-class cruise to New York City” (75)!

SPIKER. “Any moment not the Statue of Liberty should be coming into view. In a few hours we’ll be starting our new life, in New York City” (75)!

SPIKER. “I hear Coney Island’s full of suckers” (75).

CENTIPEDE. “He swam around in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean until he found me” (91).

JAMES. “That’s the Empire State Building! We’ve traveled across the Atlantic Ocean to New York City” (92)!

LADAH LORD. “Ladies and gentlemen, this is your pilot speaking, we’re about to make our final decent into New York’s JFK International airport” (93).

LADAH LORD. “The peach fell to the earth landing on the spire of the Empire State Building” (94)!

BUNNY MACKENZIE THE THIRD. “It’s stuck on the Empire State building” (94)!

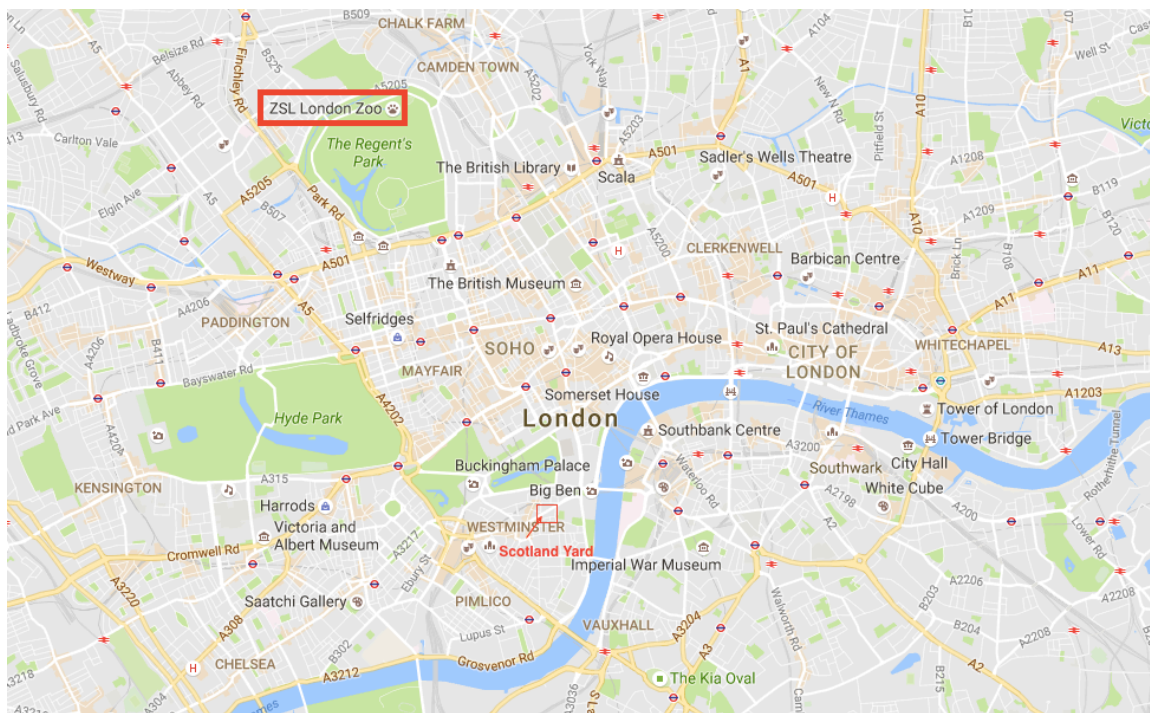


Fig. 1. Map of London, England. *Google Maps*, Google, 2016, www.google.com/maps/place/London,+UK. Accessed 12 Nov. 2016.



Fig. 2. Map of Dover, England, Calais, France, and the English Channel. *BBC News*, BBC, 2016, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk/7637327.stm. Accessed 12 Nov. 2016.



Fig. 3. Map of Hollywood and Malibu, California. *Google Maps*, Google, 2016, www.google.com/maps/@34.0049937,-118.4411485,10z. Accessed 12 Nov. 2016.

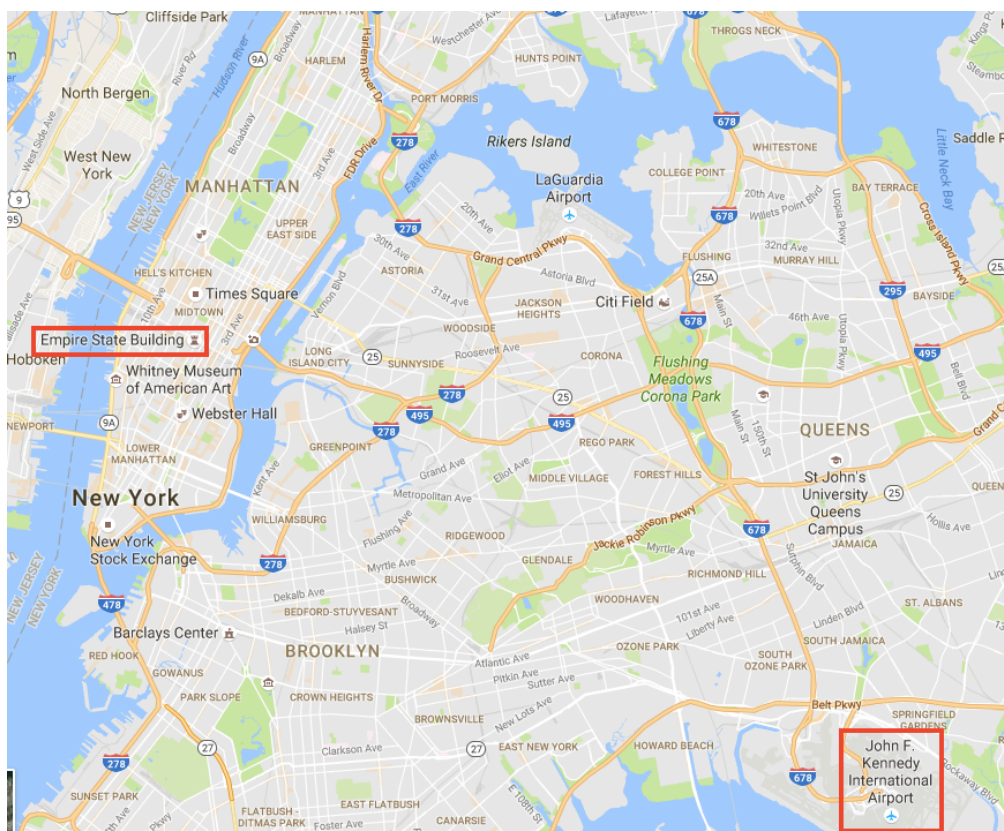


Fig. 4. Map of New York City, New York. *Google Maps*, Google, 2016, www.google.com/maps/place/New+York,+NY. Accessed 12 Nov. 2016.

Pronunciations

Each word below is designated by page number. All page numbers refer to Music Theatre International's *James and the Giant Peach*, by Tim McDonald, with music and lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul. Unless otherwise noted IPA pronunciations are from *Merriam-Webster*.

- iii James Henry Trotter: JAY-mes HEN-ree TRA-ter, IPA \ 'jāmz\ \ 'hen-rē\ \ 'trā-tər\
- iii Ladahlord: LAH-duh-lord, IPA \ 'lä-də-lórd\
- iii Bitsy Botana: BIT-see BAH-ta-na, IPA \ 'bit-sē\ \ 'bät-ta-na\
- iii Oompa Loompas: UME-pah LOOM-pahs, IPA /ʊmpəʊmpəz/ (*Oxford Dictionaries*)

- 23 Fan-tas-ma-rific: fan-TAS-ma-rific, IPA \fan-'täz-mä-ri-fik\
- 23 Remark-u-lous: re-MARK-u-lous, IPA \ri-'märk-yü-ləs\
- 24 Splen-dif-erous: spleen-DIF-er-ous, IPA \splen-'di-f(ə-)ləs\
- 24 Spec-magical: spek-MAG-ik-al, IPA \spek-'ma-ji-kəl\
- 25 Connoisseur: con-i-SIR, IPA \,kä-nə-'sər\
- 26 Oaski: oh-SA-key, IPA \ō-'sä-kē\
- 34 Cachet: ka-SHAY, IPA \ka-'shā\
- 37 Gajillionaires: guh-JILL-eon-airs, IPA /gə'jilyə,ne(ə)rz/
- 48 Ridic-u-matically: re-DICK-u-MAT-ick-lee, IPA \rə-'di-kyə-'ma-tik-lē\
- 48 Terror-ific-ly: TEAR-or-IF-ick-lee, IPA \ 'ter-ər-'if-ik-lē\
- 51 Calais: cal-LAY, IPA \ka-'lā\
- 52 Dreg: D-reg, IPA \ 'dreg\
- 52 Scromp: SKA-romp, IPA \ 'skrōmp\
- 53 Scrunch: SKA-runch, IPA \ 'skrənch\
- 57 Bon appetit: BUHN ap-e-TEAT, IPA: \ bō-nā-pā-tē\
- 58 Insecta: in-SEK-ta, IPA: \in-'sek-tə\
- 58 Orthoptera: or-THAWP-ta-ra, IPA: \òr-'thäp-tə-rə\
- 58 Caelifera: SEE-luh-FUR-uh, IPA: /'kaɛ.li.ferə/ (*Encyclopedia.com*)
- 67 Sayonora: sigh-ah-NAR-uh, IPA \,sī-ə-'när-ə\
- 78 Schtick: sh-a-TIK, IPA \ 'shtik\
- 87 Bootylicious: BOO-tea-LI-shas, IPA \ 'bü-tē-'li-shəs\
- 87 Que Bonita: KEY bo-NEAT-ta, IPA /kju:/ /bu-'ni-tə\ (*Spanish Central*)
- 87 Papacita: pa-PEE-SEAT-ta, IPA /pa-pi-'sē- tə\ (*Oxford Dictionaries*)

87 Ven conmigo: vehn co-ME-go, \ben\ \kom'miyo\ (*Spanish Central*)

87 Mami: mah-ME, IPA \Má-mí\ (*Spanish Central*)

88 Remark-u-lous-ly: re-MARK-u-lous-lee, IPA \ri-'märk-yü-ləs-lē\

Literary Allusions

“Oompa Loompas and Willy Wonka enter” (McDonald 48).

WILLY WONKA & OOMPA LOOMPAS. “Oompah Loompah doopity—/Ahhhhh”

(48)!

SPIKER AND SPONGE. “Who can replace/That Frankenstein face” (61)?

References to the Natural World of the Play

As the musical’s title indicates, a giant peach is featured in the show. The peach is mentioned a total of sixty-three times, twelve of which refer to it as a “giant peach.” The musical also features insects as characters including Earthworm, Centipede, Ladybug, Grasshopper, and Spider. Although scientifically speaking not all the bugs portrayed are insects both the novel and musical use this delineation when referring to them as a unit or group. For the purposes of this analysis, references to the peach have been omitted from the following list, unless new or abnormal information is revealed. A similar omission has been made for references referring to the insect characters; however, mentions of each insect itself are included below.

JAMES. “We’ll soar to the northern star” (3).

ALL. “There might be sunshine or thunder/But we proceed” (3).

LADAH LORD. “We’ve got James and a giant peach that flies” (3).

KARL KREATOR. “It’s a rhino” (4)!

JAMES. “Come here, little Ladybug” (5).

JAMES. "I see you too, Mr. Grasshopper" (5).

JAMES. "Over the garden and scraping the tops of the trees" (6).

JAMES. "What is it like looking down on the beach?/Sailing though sky out of
everyone's reach/Suddenly free as a leaf playing tag with the breeze" (6).

JAMES. "Tucked in the clouds is there somewhere you won't be alone" (6)?

VAGRANT SOLO 3. "Just imagine a lice infested boy loafing about the house" (13)?!

SPONGE. "That's where you'll live with the rest of the creepy-crawlies" (16).

SPIKER. "How stupid do you have to be to be eaten by a rhino. In broad daylight mind
you" (16)?

JAMES. "Is that the seashore? Way down at the bottom of the hill" (18)?

SPIKER. "Have the 'lil beast cut down that wretched old peach tree. It's full of spiders
and crawlin' vermin" (18).

JAMES. "That's my old house, and those are my friends—playing by the sea" (18)!

JAMES. "To the seashore" (18)!

SPONGE. "It is extraordinarily hot today; the seashore may be exactly what we need"
(18).

SPIKER. "It's chocked full of lovely bites, perfect for the beach" (18)!

SPIKER. "Oh, a day at the beach sounds delightful" (19)!

SPIKER. "We'll change into our bathing costumes at the beach" (19).

SPIKER. "Oh, I've walked through a bloomin' spider's web" (19)!

SPONGE. "I told you that peach tree was full of vermin" (19).

SPONGE. "There's a huge, horrible looking spider on your head" (19)!

SPIKER. "You, will take this axe and chop down that rotten old peach tree" (20).

SPONGE. “And kill every single crawling thing you find” (20)!

JAMES. “Mr. Centipede, I guess you’ll have to search elsewhere for dinner tonight” (22).

LADAH LORD. “And I suppose it’s not a kitten, since the bag is air tight oh, dear! What if it is a kitten” (23)?

LADAH LORD. “Milkweed milk/A strand of silk/A rare Osaki juice/Two raven’s claws/Four tiger paws/The marrow of a moose/Then add to our soup/Tarantula poop/The tiniest scoop will do/And plop in a drop/Of sloppy joe/Made from chopped up kangaroo” (26).

LADAHOLD. “But remember, whomever the slithering crocodile tongues meet first, be it fish or fowl, beast or bug, twig or tree, that will be the one who receives the full power of their magic” (28).

SPONGE. ““Why don’t we go to the seashore?” Seashore, my sun burned patootie” (30).

SPONGE. “Are you afraid of centipedes with thousands of stinging legs crawling down the back of your neck” (30)?

SPONGE. “How about flesh eating earthworms wiggling between your toes” (31)?

SPIKER. “Just one shilling to see the world’s largest peach” (33)!

BITSY BOTANT. “We’re here to salute the fabulous fruit” (34)!

REPORTERS AND GARDEN GUILD. “‘Cause there’s money money money on that tree” (35).

REPORTERS AND GARDEN GUILD. “All that money on that tree” (35).

SPIKER AND SPONGE. “You just need a seed/And a big back yard” (36).

SPIKER AND SPONGE. “‘Cause money grows on trees” (36)!

JAMES. “Do you think we could move to the seashore” (39)?

“A magical door is eventually revealed leading mysteriously inside the peach” (42).

JAMES. “No clear path, no shining star” (42).

GRASSHOPPER. “Glowworm, a little light, if you please” (43)?

SPIDER. “You’re clever, like a spider, aren’t you, James” (45)?

GRASSHOPPER. “We’re insects. At least we were insects” (46).

LADAH LORD. “The peach flew through fences and fields frightening farm animals of
all shapes and sizes” (48)!

LADAH LORD. “It soared right over the edge of the cliff” (48)!

CENTIPEDE. “In the ocean” (50)!

EARTHWORM. “Have you ever seen an earthworm swim” (50)?

GRASSHOPPER. “The peach does seem rather seaworthy” (51).

SPIDER. “Then we should be across the channel and on dry land in no time at all” (51)!

GRASSHOPPER. “Traveling on the breezes” (51)!

GRASSHOPPER. “But the sky is clear and the sea is calm” (51).

GRASSHOPPER. “We’ll set our sail for nothing but sea” (51).

GRASSHOPPER. “Take a ride on the tide” (51).

GRASSHOPPER. “At the intersection/Where ocean meets the sky” (52).

LADAH LORD. “Beware of insect eating sharks” (54)!

CENTIPEDE. “Even from the middle we should see land, the channel ain’t that wide”
(56).

JAMES. “It’s the current. It’s. . . swept us out to sea” (56)!

EARTHWORM. “A jaunt to France is one thing, but an oceanic journey” (56)?

EARTHWORM. “I mustn’t be exposed to the sun” (56).

CENTIPEDE. "Salt water" (57).

CENTIPEDE. "And here all along I thought you were a cricket" (58).

GRASSHOPPER. "As I just specified, I am a short-horned grasshopper. Crickets and
other long-horned grasshoppers do not make music, they make noise" (59).

EARTHWORM. "Actually, we earthworms are both male and female" (59).

CENTIPEDE. "I'll bet the human doesn't even know where grasshoppers keep their
ears" (59).

SPIDER. "Have you even begun to wonder/Why a ladybug sports her spots" (60)?

CENTIPEDE. "Have you even begun to wonder/How a grasshopper twangs a tune" (60)?

SPIDER AND CENTIPEDE. "Ya' hear symphony strings/Playin' love songs to the
moon" (60).

SPIDER AND CENTIPEDE. "But don't you wonder how/A giant peach can grow to the
sky/A six-foot earthworm catches your eye/You guide through the night by the
light of a firefly" (60)?

GRASSHOPPER AND EARTHWORM. "Have you even begun to wonder/If a hornet
can play the horn" (61)?

LADYBUG. "Can you even believe what a spider can weave" (61)?

SPIDER. "I've been spinning that silk since before you were born" (61).

CENTIPEDE. "Have you ever begun to wonder/Why a beetle can't beat the
blues?/'Cause he'll never compete with my thirty-eight feet/I got lacewings lacin'
my shoes" (61).

INSECTS. "Or sail a peach like a catamaran" (62).

LADYBUG. “Even though this wasn’t the intended outcome of our little escape, it does feel quite wonderful to be free of that wretched hillside” (69).

CENTIPEDE. “Picture me, not much more than a larvae, a wee lad of a centipede” (70).

LADYBUG. “Even ladybugs! Who doesn’t like ladybugs” (71)?

GRASSHOPPER. “I like ladybugs” (71).

LADYBUG. “She whispers in the breeze/He’s waving from a star” (73).

GRASSHOPPER. “Look, his face is in the moon” (73).

GRASSHOPPER. “See her laughing in that cloud” (73).

INSECTS (MINUS CENTIPEDE). “In the music of the forest/In the waves against the sand” (73).

SPONGE. “You thought you could ride/On the fruits of your dreams” (76).

SPIKER. “You thought you would glide/Just like peaches and creams” (76).

SPONGE. “You got breath like goat manure” (76).

LADAH LORD/PORTER. “Floatin’ in the ocean” (79).

SPIKER. “They look like. . .giant bugs” (79).

SPIKER. “A giant peach is gonna attract giant bugs” (79).

JAMES. “It’s a beautiful sunrise” (80).

CENTIPEDE. “It’s these waves, they’re making me feel—oh, oh, no” (80)!

JAMES. “They’re sharks” (80)!

INSECTS. “Sharks” (81)?!

SPIDER. “There are thousands of seagulls eating Centipede’s vomit” (81)!

CENTIPEDE. “Blasted seagulls” (81)!

EARTHWORM. “Seagulls?! I’m terrified of seagulls” (81)!

JAMES. "The sharks are coming back" (81)!

JAMES. "If an aeroplane can take to the sky, why can't a peach" (82)?

LADYBUG. "The seagulls" (82)!

JAMES. "Spider, is your web strong" (82)?

SPIDER. "I can spin all the web you need" (82)!

JAMES. "We'll loop Spider's web around the seagulls' necks, and then we'll tie the other
end to the stem of the peach" (82).

CENTIPEDE. "And how are you going to get those seagulls down here" (82)?

JAMES. "But you are the biggest, juiciest earthworm in the entire world" (83).

EARTHWORM. "I am not about to be pecked to death by a flock of seagulls" (83).

JAMES. "Seagulls" (84)!

JAMES. "If you are viewing me in your bird's eye view" (84).

JAMES. "Come and squeeze a luscious little worm" (84).

CENTIPEDE. "You start dividing a worm, then two grow back" (84).

EARTHWORM. "Come 'ere seagulls, let's ruffle some feathers" (86).

EARTHWORM. "Come and get it seagulls" (86)!

LADYBUG. "We're actually flying through the clouds" (88)!

CENTIPEDE. "One day soon, the human's gonna get tired of playin' with the bugs and
that'll be that" (89).

GRASSHOPPER. "Keep feeding him web" (90)!

EARTHWORM. "Couldn't you have kept Centipede underwater just a little while
longer" (91).

SPONGE. "After we fumigate the bugs, of course" (95).

SPIKER AND SPONGE. “Here buggies, buggies, buggies” (95)!

JAMES. “We held on/Through that storm/The clouds have finally parted/Now we’re safe and warm” (97).

GRASSHOPPER. “You were lost on the sea/But you’re safe here with me/To the end” (98).

SPIDER. “I used my web to build the most amazing bridges the world has ever seen” (98)!

GRASSHOPPER. “As for the enormous peach pit, we turned it into the most wonderful home where this unlikely family still lives today” (99).

References to the Social/Political/Cultural/Ideological Worlds of the Play

Social

MATRON NURSE. “The most important thing from here on is your Aunties. You do everything they ask of you. Don’t talk back or be a nuisance. You can’t ever come back here James. You’ve got a family to take care of you now” (8).

SPIKER. “We’re gonna eke out a living going whatever’s necessary to get ahead in this nasty, cruel world” (9).

SPONGE. “Drop out of school” (36)!

SPIKER AND SPONGE. “You lumpish lawyers/All your walls of P.H.D.s/What a waste/You’ve been debased/’Cause money grows on trees” (36)!

SPIKER. “And we get all the money in advance! All we’ve gotta do is deliver that peach” (39).

JAMES. “Just a step away the world’s ok/But you can’t see that far” (41).

JAMES. “Can’t go back/You’re moving through” (41).

LADYBUG. “I will go first, I am royalty after all” (45).

LADYBUG. “I’m a Lady” (45).

SPONGE. “I can’t go to jail, the food is wholly unacceptable to a sophisticated palate
such as mine” (65).

CENTIPEDE. “My family, we were all in the sock and shoe racket—we’re pretty famous
in the bug world” (71).

CENTIPEDE. “They were all fumigated, by Spiker and Sponge, in the great raid of fifty-
nine” (71).

CENTIPEDE. “That is a human boy. His kind pulls off our legs, or burns us with
magnifying glasses! He is not one of us! He will never be one of us” (71)!

LADYBUG. “His type are pests” (71).

CENTIPEDE. “And your type are snobs” (72)!

CENTIPEDE. “Oh, but there is a problem which each of you continues to ignore. Are
you forgetting what happened to your fiancé, Spider? Or your family Ladybug?
Oh, sure the human saved the day and aren’t we all lucky for that? But you listen
to me. One day soon, the human’s gonna get tired of playin’ with the bugs and
that’ll be that” (89).

GRASSHOPPER. “Grasshopper and Ladybug got married and had many, many children
of their own” (99).

Political

BOBBY-COP. “As long as you keep them contributions to the policemen’s fund up to
date, we’ve got no trouble with you” (12).

MATRON NURSE. "You'll be paid twenty-seven pounds a week to care for the boy"
(14).

SPONGE. "We're here with the commander of the United States Air Force" (92)!

EARTHWORM. "And I became a social activist forming 'BAIT' Bugs Against
Insensitive Terminology" (98).

Cultural

SPIKER. "Technically, we own it!/James can be our helper-monkey slave" (13)!

SPIKER AND SPONGE. "He's property of Spiker and Sponge" (13).

VAGRANTS. "You'll do as you're told/Or you'll be auctioned and sold/Because you're
property/Of Spiker and Sponge" (15).

SPONGE. "And kill every single crawling thing you find" (20)!

SPIKER. "People will pay money just to look at it" (33)!

SPIKER. "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, roll on up and see the eighth wonder of
the world" (33)!

REPORTERS. "Exclusives get more cachet" (34).

BUZZ. "Life is marvelous in Malibu" (36).

JAMES. "A family doesn't make you sleep outside/A family doesn't laugh and say you
lied" (41).

CENTIPEDE. "Little boys are the worst of his kind" (44)!

SPIDER. "You're clever, like a spider, aren't you, James" (45)!

GRASSHOPPER. "We'll get through/If we work as a team" (53).

LADYBUG. "It's not a proper ship unless it has a flag" (53)!

CENTIPEDE. "I propose we eat the human" (56).

SPIDER. "There's a lot you can tell/From a ruby red shell/If you look real close/And
connect the dots" (60).

SPIDER. "There's so much you're missin'/Such a lot you thought you got" (60).

LADYBUG. "Who doesn't like ladybugs" (71)?

LADYBUG. "James, you parents are with you always" (73).

LADYBUG. "But once we go/We're not gone/We keep living on and on" (73).

LADYBUG. "They are with you/Everywhere that you are" (73).

SPIKER. "I hear Coney Island's full of suckers" (75)!

GRASSHOPPER. "And what a peculiar family we are" (97).

GRASSHOPPER AND LADYBUG. "Just like a father and a mother" (100).

CENTIPEDE, SPIDER, AND EARTHWORM. "Just like a sister and a brother" (100).

Ideological

LADAHLORD. "Hear the weirdest tale that was ever told" (1).

LADAHLORD. "Yet, each peculiar twist that I tell is true/And you can see it in plain
view" (1).

ALL. "It's all a bit bizarre" (3).

ALL. "Whimsy and wonder/What else do we need" (3)?

ALL. "A pack of actors all in disguise" (3).

LADAHLORD. "Only you have the power to change the course of your wretched little
life" (24).

LADAHLORD. "Now, all you have to do is pick a potion from the book, devour it, and
fabulous, unbelievable things will happen to you" (24)!

JAMES. "'Cause there is magic/Now you know" (42).

GRASSHOPPER. “We’re tumblin’ off where nobody’s been/How true adventures
always begin” (51).

GRASSHOPPER. “A map is never better than/Driftin’ off without a plan” (51).

INSECTS. “Magic spells can truly come true” (62).

INSECTS. “Your world can change/Because you believe it can” (62).

INSECTS. “All your dreams can truly come true” (62).

The Authors and Their World

James and the Giant Peach was adapted for the stage as a musical, by Timothy Allen McDonald, with a score by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul. The team combines an expert in the field of educational musical theatre with an up and coming songwriting duo. This collaboration results in an imaginative re-telling of Roald Dahl’s famous work.

Timothy Allen McDonald has been creating theatre from a young age. Growing up in Northern California, he would write musicals with the neighborhood children, based on whatever popular sheet music was on hand. “Many bed sheets were sacrificed for curtains, many curtains become costumes and a good time was generally had by all” (McDonald, *Official Website of Tim McDonald*).

Although he loved telling and acting out stories, McDonald always struggled with reading. Rather than admit his difficulty with reading, he preferred to say he disliked the activity, but in third grade that would all change. His teacher, Ms. Spencer, put a book in front of him and said his homework assignment was to read just the first page. After putting it off all evening he finally began reading the first page, and then the second, until he had finished the whole book. That book was Roald Dahl’s *James and the Giant Peach*. He came back the next day so invigorated by Dahl’s story that he acted out the whole

thing for his class. It was not until college that McDonald officially was diagnosed with dyslexia, but he credits his love of reading and storytelling to Dahl's books (Music Theatre International).

McDonald stuck close to home for college, attending California State University, Chico where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in Music. In 1990, just two years after graduating, McDonald founded the Chico City Light Opera alongside many of the same neighborhood children with whom he used to create musicals. He served as executive director of the company for six years. In addition to administrative duties, he directed, performed, and taught for the company, but could also be found attacking the less glamorous jobs of running a theatre, including fixing the plumbing. In his *Chico News & Review* article "Music Man," Robert Speer describes the young adult McDonald as "a golden-haired prodigy with an irrepressible smile, a man so in love with musical theatre that he virtually glowed with enthusiasm."

McDonald was recruited in 1996 by Music Theatre International (MTI) to head and create their education division, the first such division of any major musical licensing firm. Under MTI's CEO Freddie Gershon, he founded the MTI Broadway Junior Collection, which celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 2016 and boasts over 100,000 productions to date. During his tenure at MTI, McDonald mostly served as a playwright, working with revered musical theatre authors including Stephen Sondheim, Stephen Schwartz, Arthur Laurents, and Lynn Aherns to adapt their works for young performers. He was able to partner MTI with Disney Theatricals in 2003 to begin turning their animated movies into productions for student and child performers (McDonald, *Official Website of Tim McDonald*).

In 2006, he left MTI with the support of Gershon to form his own company iTheatrics, which continues his educational work but has “an added focus on developing new musical theatre works” (McDonald, *Official Website of Tim McDonald*). Not only did McDonald’s connections bring the Jim Henson Company and MacMillian McGraw in as clients, but also many of his former contacts followed his move to iTheatrics including Disney; even MTI is a client. At iTheatrics McDonald founded the Junior Theatre Festival, which celebrates educational musical theatre by bringing together student groups who perform Junior versions of shows every Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend. The Educational Theatre Association awarded iTheatrics its “Standing Ovation” Award in 2016 for its “nationwide impact in the field of theatre education” (American Theatre Editors).

All told, McDonald has adapted and written over sixty-five scripts for young performers for many major theatre rights organizations such as: MTI, Disney, Tams Witmark, R&H Theatricals, Samuel French, and the Jim Henson Company. His career has solidified McDonald as both a leading authority in musical theatre education and one of its greatest advocates, including serving on the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities’ Turnaround Arts Initiative.

In addition to adapting musicals, McDonald is also an accomplished director and playwright. Staying in his wheelhouse of family theatre, McDonald directed the premiers of *Dear Edwina* Off-Broadway and *The Phantom Tollbooth* at the Kennedy Center; but it is as a playwright that he continues to flourish. He is best known for *The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley*, *Emmet Otter’s Jug-Band Christmas*, *James and the Giant Peach*, and *Roald Dahl’s Willy Wonka*.

Roald Dahl's influence on McDonald stuck with him throughout his career, so it was no surprise when the first full length musical he wrote the book for was based on one of Dahl's most loved works. He began work on the musical *Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka* in 2003, while he was still working for MTI. Leslie Bricusse, part of the team who wrote the Oscar-nominated score for the 1971 movie, was brought on to adapt the score for the musical. The show was by all accounts a success. It was well received by audiences in its Kennedy Center premiere, toured nationally for two years, and even had a command performance at the White House ("Timothy Allen McDonald").

McDonald found inspiration in the opening song of *Willy Wonka*, "Pure Imagination." In the stage adaptation, he uses this opening moment to encourage audiences to participate in creating the world of the musical. In a review of the premiere for *The Washington Post*, Nicole Arthur describes the show as opening with a bare stage. Within the opening number a set is revealed, a device he replicates in the opening of *James and the Giant Peach*. Asking the audience to exert more of their imagination is a deliberate move on McDonald's part: "We're saying, 'We're going to build this world, but we need you to help us.' . . . They [the audiences] have to lend their energy and their imagination to make it work—we're not going to give it all to them (McDonald qtd. in Arthur). The production relied on audiences' stretching their imagination to see what a set could not show of Wonka's world, i.e. the chocolate river. McDonald offers two solutions to help audience members spark their creativity and imagine Wonka's unique world: Willy Wonka as a narrative guide, and non-human characters represented by puppets.

McDonald returned to both narration and puppetry when he began to work on his second Roald Dahl musical adaptation in 2005. Through his work on *Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka*, McDonald met Dahl's widow and was able to secure the stage rights to *James and the Giant Peach*, the book that had made such an incredible impression on him in third grade. McDonald faced some of the same challenges of adapting *Willy Wonka* as he worked on *James and the Giant Peach*. One was dealing with two main characters, James and his peach, the other in creating the physical world onstage. The story requires the peach to do many things: "It has to grow, it has to fall and roll, it has to go into the water and float, and then it also has to fall from the air, land on the top of the Empire State Building and then fall to the ground" (McDonald qtd. in Gioia). A special kind of skill is required to make that happen outside of one's imagination, and similar to *Willy Wonka*, McDonald relies on a mysterious narrator, puppetry, and theatre magic.

McDonald never expected his biggest challenge in adapting the novel into a musical would be finding a composer and lyricist. It was three years into his work on the libretto that he would find them. In 2008, McDonald received calls from Freddie Gerhson, his former boss at MTI, Lynn Aherns, Tony-winning lyricist, and Michael Kerker, head of the American Society of Composer's musical theatre division. They all said the same thing: Pasek and Paul would be the perfect songwriting team to help him with *James and the Giant Peach* (*James & The Giant Peach—The Musical*).

Benj Pasek and Justin Paul met as undergraduates at the University of Michigan in 2003. Both were there as musical theatre performance majors, but they struggled to get good roles. What began as goofing around creating songs for the minor characters they played soon turned into creating original material. Before graduation, they found

themselves with a fully written song cycle, *Edges*, and became the youngest winners of the Jonathan Larson Award, which provides grants to promising musical theatre composers and lyricists (Vire).

Both come from musical families, but otherwise they have very different backgrounds. Pasek grew up in Philadelphia with a liberal Jewish family. He was always around music since his mother was part of a local music group in Philly. She also wrote children's albums that consisted of songs she made up documenting moments in her own children's lives. Pasek remembers being the only gay kid in school at a time when it was not as common and accepted as today. Although it was never a problem, there was a sense of "being an outsider, or feeling like you aren't part of a norm" (Pasek qtd. in Rule). This would become a theme in the duo's later work. Pasek knew theatre was a world he wanted to be part of at twelve years old when he saw *The Lion King* on Broadway. That moment inspired him to pursue musical theatre as a career.

Paul was raised in Westport, Connecticut, a town he describes as "progressive Christian" (Paul qtd. in Rule). His father was a minister, and so he grew up singing and playing music primarily at church. Both his parents played piano, and at seven he began formal lessons. Paul was also inspired to pursue a career in musical theatre after seeing a production of *Cats* at a young age. Pasek and Paul believe strongly that being raised in different environments benefits their partnership, bringing a complexity of viewpoints and a well-roundedness to their work. Although Paul is more musical and Pasek more character driven, they continue to share the credit for both music and lyrics (Karp).

Ultimately, they attribute their rapid rise in the musical theatre world to the social media boom. Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter all launched while the team was in

college—2004, 2005, and 2006 respectively. These new outlets for marketing allowed their work to be heard, seen, and shared like never before. Self-promotion was no longer limited to paper and hoping a Google search would bring up your website. With the click of a button anyone could create an event and broadcast it to a large network of people. Pasek and Paul freely acknowledge the impact: “‘The Internet era has revolutionized songwriting,’ added Pasek. ‘You can find songs online, you can hear them on YouTube, it’s how you get noticed and seen.’ ‘That’s what happened to us,’ agrees Paul” (Ouzounian). In fact, *Edges* includes a song entitled “Be My Friend” commonly referred to as “The Facebook Song.”

Graduating as a known quantity had its perks. Lynn Aherns became a mentor, and this eventually led to her recommending the team to McDonald. Despite the glowing endorsements, McDonald wanted to make sure the team was a good fit and gave them three moments from the show to musicalize. They came back to McDonald in less than a week with the opening, “Right Before Your Eyes,” James’ first solo, “On My Way Home,” and a number for the evil aunts, “Property of Spiker and Sponge” (*James & The Giant Peach—The Musical*). McDonald loved the songs and they remain in the final version of the script.

After a workshop production of *James and the Giant Peach* at Goodspeed Opera House in Connecticut, Pasek and Paul moved on to their next project: *A Christmas Story, The Musical*. Amongst other honors, this musical would earn them their first Tony award nomination for Best Original Score. The two were still auditioning for work when they booked the show. They saw it was still looking for a composer and lyricist, submitted a few songs, and were chosen. The success of *A Christmas Story* and the response to their

score brought new interest to the “golden boys of American musical theatre” (Ouzounian).

In 2012, their adaptation of the movie *Dogfight* premiered Off-Broadway—a project they had begun working on in the lull between graduation and being hired for *James and the Giant Peach*. Soon they were being hailed as “The heirs to Rodgers and Hammerstein” by *Vanity Fair* and the bearers of “the musical theatre torch on behalf of Broadway’s next generation of composers . . .” by *Time Out New York* (Pasek and Paul). Their work on *Dogfight* earned them the Richard Rodgers Award for Musical Theatre from the American Academy of Arts and Letters as well as the Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Musical.

Their most recent stage musical, *Dear Evan Hansen*, made its Broadway premiere in 2016. This is the first original musical the two have written and was inspired by an incident at Pasek’s high school. The musical earned the duo their first Tony and Grammy awards. In an interview with *Metro Weekly*, Pasek talks about how this story differs from the themes in their previous work: “there’s a sort of need to connect, the need to be a part of a community, the need to be a part of something larger than yourself, especially in this digital, isolated age that we now find ourselves in” (Rule). Remove the digital aspect and Pasek might as well be referring to James’ plight in *James and the Giant Peach*.

The duo is known for its malleable style, suiting the songs to the characters, as well as using “their catchy lyrics and robust melodies . . . to enhance and propel the story” (*The Hollywood Reporter* qtd. in *Pasek and Paul*). There is no doubt that their broad range of influences helps to set them apart. In *Metro Weekly*’s article the duo lists musical theatre greats—Schwartz, Aherns & Flaherty, Sondheim—alongside Taylor

Swift, Stevie Wonder, Billy Joel, and John Mayer, as influences. Pasek says they seek to find a style somewhere “between what you would hear on the radio and what you would hear on a traditional Broadway Stage” (Rule), all while still advancing the plot through song. This is something they accomplish by working closely with the book writer to be sure they are musicalizing the right moments for the arc of the show.

The duo returned to *James and the Giant Peach* with McDonald to make changes and edits for the world premiere at the Seattle Children’s Theatre in 2013. At this point, Pasek and Paul had a Tony nomination and a hit Off-Broadway musical under their belts and had settled into their unique style. Both Pasek and Paul grew up reading Roald Dahl in school, but as children they saw them as the “books that your teacher assigned to you that you secretly liked” (Paul qtd. in Jones). They always felt *James and the Giant Peach* would translate well onto the stage, especially as a musical, due to its adventurous spirit combined with its intricacy and emotional depth.

In McDonald’s musical expertise he gave the songwriters emotionally charged moments to musicalize as well as complete stylistic freedom. The result is a varied and quirky score with a “wide range of musical styles: ranging from swing, vaudeville, gospel, and scat” (BBW News Desk). Pasek and Paul allowed the individuality of the characters to inspire their musical choices. For instance, James’ aunts become more laughable than horrible when dancing and singing in vaudevillian style. These kinds of tweaks and refinements to the story helped the creative team to counteract the darker elements of *James and the Giant Peach* that do not translate well to the stage.

A uniformity exists between the book and the score, reflective of all the members of the writing team agreeing about the heart of Dahl’s story. McDonald identifies it as

“the most universal story” since most people are born into one family and yet “the vast majority of us create a family of our own” (Watson). Speaking on behalf of the team, Paul identifies it as “a story about how a young orphan becomes part of a new wonderfully bizarre family. And in fact we all have our ‘found family;’ they may be our blood, they may be people we met doing a production of *James and the Giant Peach*” (BBW News Desk). The cohesiveness of the final product, with a book and score seamlessly woven together, projects the image of a creative team as close as a family.

In the span of eight years the creative team crafted an engaging, fun, and family friendly musical that both challenges and excites children. McDonald’s educational musical theatre expertise combined with what *The New York Times* identifies as the “palpable surge of excitement that typifies a Benj Pasek and Justin Paul score” (*Pasek and Paul*) makes *James and the Giant Peach* an enduring musical for performers, production team members, and audiences of all ages.

World of the Play

Connections

Unlike most children, including the author and songwriters of *James and the Giant Peach*, I was not exposed to Roald Dahl stories until I was an adult. However, the titles were familiar to me due to their prevalence in popular culture and I grew up watching the movie *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* starring Gene Wilder. My direct exposure to Dahl’s work began in 2013 when I was hired to choreograph a production of *Willy Wonka, Jr.*, an abridged version of Tim McDonald’s original stage adaptation. The musical closely follows the movie, but I was fascinated by the balance it struck between entertainment and morality.

More recently, when I heard the limited-edition cast recording of *James and the Giant Peach*, I was again captivated by McDonald's adeptness with adapting Dahl's world for the stage. The musical upholds Dahl's balance of engaging comedy while maintaining the underlying values the story promotes, all the while walking the fine line between light and dark. As a young adult and theatre teacher working primarily with middle and high school students, the story's core messages deeply resonated with me and my experiences.

James' story immediately reminded me of the familial bond created when working on a production. The bond is strongest when a show helps to foster a true sense of ensemble, something the script of *James and the Giant Peach* does well. The musical reinforces the concept of an ensemble through its central message: everyone has a true family, beyond their biological one. Students often describe their theatre experience as being part of a family and *James and the Giant Peach* is a perfect show to reinforce that connection.

Relevance for a Contemporary Audience

James and the Giant Peach is still a new musical, but the source material was published fifty-five years ago. Even so, adaptations of Dahl's work remain relevant today, particularly to children, as they touch on universal themes everyone faces as they grow up such as teamwork, inclusiveness, and sense of self.

Teamwork is featured heavily in the musical, as the characters use each person's unique abilities to strengthen the team. In the same vein, the story also promotes inclusion. Each of the characters have their own quirks—Earthworm is afraid of everything, Ladybug insists on being first, and Centipede is constantly disgruntled. Yet,

as the characters' backstories are revealed, understanding and empathy develop amongst the characters and the audience. This sense of inclusion is enhanced by the way stereotyping, something still seen today, is portrayed in the story. The primary antagonists, Aunts Spiker and Sponge, hate James before meeting him because he is a child. In addition, a character flaw of Centipede is that he holds a grudge against all humans based on one interaction. The show's number, "Have You Even Begun to Wonder," underlines the things people overlook about each other and helps drive the musical's protagonists together.

The musical also emphasizes the importance of listening to children and allowing them to have their own voice. James flourishes in an environment where his ideas are encouraged, his troubles are acknowledged, and he is able to make his own decisions. Adults often plan so much of children's lives that their own ideas and desires are brushed aside. All people wish to have some control over their lives, and James' experience demonstrates that children can often handle more than they are given credit for.

Teamwork, inclusiveness, and a sense of self are universal lessons relevant to all people. Today's divisive society makes it all the more important to instill these lessons in children as they continue to learn and grow. *James and the Giant Peach* weaves these themes throughout the play, leaving audiences with moral lessons they can integrate into their everyday lives.

Production Updates

The musical requires no updates to the setting or time-period. The script specifies various locations including Dover, England and New York City. These settings are integral to the plot and should not be changed. Since the script is based on a popular

children's novel, any updates might confuse audiences familiar with the source material. Although the novel does not specify a time-period, the musical lists 1959 as the setting for the first scene. This indicates that the prologue occurs outside this specific time frame furthering the meta-theatricality of the musical. These references would complicate moving the piece into a more contemporary time-period, and it remains recent enough to be relevant to audiences today, especially given the continued popularity of Dahl's work.

Other Explorations

Beyond the musical's source material, Dahl's entire cannon of children's novels should be explored when studying an adaptation of one of his stories. The source material offers direct insight into how the story has been changed for the adaptation, while the author's other works offer a broader look into his unique voice and style. Dahl's name has become synonymous with a particular style of writing, storytelling, and the unique worlds he creates. Particular attention must be paid to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, as references are made in *James and the Giant Peach* to the other book's characters.

Beyond his novels, many prominent film and stage adaptations help to inform the various ways in which Dahl's worlds have been brought to life. These include the movie adaptations *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Matilda*, and *James and the Giant Peach*. All of these titles have also been adapted into major musicals, and their study offers particular insight into successful ways of transferring Dahl's world from the page to the stage. The musical adaptation of *Matilda* was written around the same time as *James and the Giant Peach* and proved wildly successful on Broadway, which offers evidence of the popularity of Dahl's stories.

Tim Burton's films provide an analogous style to that of the musical. Burton has directed movies including *The Corpse Bride*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and *Sweeney Todd* as well as produced *James and the Giant Peach*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, and *Beetlejuice*. He is famous for his "gothic cinematic style" often juxtaposing "the gothic and idyllic—the dark and the light—but since it's Burton, the darks and lights are warped by the funhouse mirror of his creativity" (Reneé). This style has become so iconic that a movie can be classified as 'Burtonesque' if it possesses the qualities of a Burton film. The pull between dark and light that distinguishes Burton's style rings true of Dahl's work and is featured heavily in the musical adaptation of *James and the Giant Peach*. Although Burton's films feature scarier characters and settings, they maintain their appeal to children, making them a perfect complement to *James and the Giant Peach*.

Orphans have become a standard archetype prevalent in children's material. From *Cinderella* to the *Harry Potter* series, orphans are a staple in children's literature and movies. When a character is an orphan "their stories can begin because they find themselves without parents, unleashed to discover the world" (Mullan). The orphan provides authors with a character "set loose from established conventions to face a world of endless possibilities (and dangers)" (Mullan). This freedom allows James' world to be filled with magic and extraordinary things to happen. Many of Dahl's novels featured orphans, including *Matilda*, *The BFG*, and *The Witches*. Although the orphans are presented differently within their stories, all feature various ways the protagonist works to overcome their circumstances. Although James lost his parents, this loss allows him to take an incredible journey, one without which he would never find his 'other' family.

Production History

James and the Giant Peach was fortunate to have three professional presentations to aid in its conception. It had a developmental premiere at Goodspeed Musicals, a staged reading at The Kennedy Center, and its world premiere at Seattle Children's Theatre (*James & The Giant Peach—The Musical*). Each theatre is dedicated to the development of new works, the first to musicals and the latter two to shows for young audiences. This offered the creative team opportunities to try out different ideas, structures, characterizations, and tones in front of audiences. The show took a dramatic turn regarding tone and intended audience following its first production, demonstrating the necessity of a developmental phase. The writers' dedication to their work and willingness to complete significant rewrites resulted in a strong family friendly musical that captures the spirit of Dahl's original work.

Goodspeed Musicals in East Haddam, Connecticut, touts itself as "the home of the American musical" (*Goodspeed Musicals*). Founded in 1963, Goodspeed has presented over seventy musical premieres, most notably *Man of La Mancha* and *Annie*, and is the first regional theatre to receive multiple Special Tony Awards. It is also home to the Max Showalter Center for Education in Musical Theatre, The Festival of New Musicals, and The Johnny Mercer Foundation Writers Colony, a month-long residency for musical theatre teams to work on new musicals (*Goodspeed Musicals*). This commitment to the development of new musicals made Goodspeed Musicals the perfect host for the developmental premiere of *James and the Giant Peach* from October 21–November 21, 2010 ("James and the Giant Peach," *Goodspeed Musicals*).

Funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the show was billed as a “new large scale musical” (Jones). However, while the production was fully staged and choreographed, the technical elements were deliberately paired down. According to McDonald’s “Author Notes”, the production was “focused exclusively on getting the storytelling right—not on the sets and costumes.” As such, the production featured suggestions of costumes and sets and was revised throughout its month long run at Goodspeed’s Terris Theatre (McDonald and Daniele).

In its initial iteration, the musical varied greatly from the novel. The creative team decided they were not writing a show for children, and instead emphasized the darker elements of Dahl’s story. The program’s “Author Notes” provided some warning:

You’re about to enter our collective imaginations and I warn you it’s not always a pretty place. You are going to experience James’ journey first hand, complete with the dreams that wake you in the middle of the night screaming in terror.
(McDonald)

In fact, the team chose to open the show with the death of James’ parents by an escaped rhinoceros at the zoo, a moment presented fleetingly as a flashback in the novel.

The musical also expanded the plot lines for the Old Man and James’ aunts, Spiker and Sponge. Dahl’s Old Man became Marvo the Magician, who helps James concoct the magic green worm’s potion, which leads to the peach’s growth and the insects’ transformations. The most significant changes were motivated by keeping the antagonists, Spiker and Sponge, alive after the peach rolls off on its grand adventure. Their presence served as the impetus for some of the darker moments of the show. They catch up to Marvo, whom they know is responsible for the death of James’ parents, and force him to unleash a magic spell to destroy the peach. When the spell fails, the aunts

threaten to kill all of the insects unless James gives them the peach. McDonald did keep the aunts' fate of being crushed by the peach, but simply moved it to the end of the script.

The European tradition of physical theatre inspired McDonald to collaborate with the movement company Pilobolus on the production. The Connecticut based company, famous for its unique blend of dance, acrobatics, and weight sharing, seemed like the perfect fit. Following their mission to present “unique, diverse collaborations that break the barriers between creative disciplines” (“About—Pilobolus”), the company began experimenting with shadow puppetry and shadow theatre in 2007. This unique expertise matched the vision for *James and the Giant Peach* at Goodspeed, and the dancers became a large part of creating the physical world of the play. They would “link together in various ways to form shapes that look like animals and plants” (Ritter and Griswold) in addition to using shadow puppetry for pantomiming the peach's movements. This partnership was viewed as a stylistically innovative way to combat the challenge of showing the audience a peach growing, falling, sailing, flying, and bursting.

Due to the developmental nature of the production, there are no professional reviews of the show available, but Chris Caggiano, who publishes personal reviews on his blog *Everything I Know I Learned From Musicals*, offers some insight to the Goodspeed production. Caggiano saw the show's potential despite “static staging” and a “forgettable score.” Unlike most musical developments with a strong first act and a wavering second, Goodspeed's *James and the Giant Peach* suffered from the opposite, a “first act that's an unfocused mess, but a second half that reveals just enough talent and heart to mark this work as a show of great promise” (Caggiano).

By and large the biggest failure of the production was Pilobolus' integration into the show. Caggiano claims the production failed to "make full or even adequate use of the Pilobolus dancers." He references the shark attack on the peach as the only engaging use of the company's work and hypothesizes that overall it is "these moments of imaginative synthesis" where the show is lacking. Pasek and Paul, the songwriting team, cite the problem as an overreliance on the dance company to solve storytelling challenges:

PAUL. . . . I think that sometimes we would sort of excuse not thinking through what should be dramatically happening in the moment because we thought 'Well, Pilobolus is magical, they'll make that moment magical,' without being like 'How are we going to tell them to do that?

PASEK. What are we doing magical?

PAUL. I think we would rely on other people's abilities sometimes and not give ourselves enough responsibility in storytelling. (qtd in Davenport)

The show never left development while at Goodspeed Musicals, but the production helped pinpoint where the script needed more work.

The team began significant rewrites, and in May 2012, a revamped *James and the Giant Peach* was presented at The Kennedy Center's New Visions/New Voices Festival. The biennial festival features a five-day intensive workshop during which new works for young audiences are revised throughout a rigorous rehearsal process. At the end of the intensive, the plays "are presented as rehearsed readings during a three-day national conference for an audience of theatre professionals, educators, publishers, and others interested in this field" ("New Visions/New Voices"). As such, there is little to no publicly available information regarding this version of the musical. The festival website does state that Tim McDonald co-directed the reading with Marty Johnson, a member of his iTheatrics staff.

It can be deduced that between the Goodspeed production and The Kennedy Center reading, the show had made a transition away from the initial idea of “not your average kiddie fodder” (McDonald, “Author Notes”). The festival’s mission centers around workshopping plays intended for young audiences, the very demographic the creative team steered away from in the first production. Luckily, a private blog ran an article featuring comments overheard at the festival and offers the following glimpse into other changes made to the script: “He spoke for the magic of the moment, and was our guy. *Right before our eyes*—what more do we need?” (Gonzalez qtd. in Chusid). Between the Goodspeed production and The Kennedy Center reading, the show found its opening number, “Right Before Your Eyes,” which features the magician Ladahlord as a narrator for the story, a conceit that remains in the licensed script.

This revised version of *James and the Giant Peach*, now focused on a family friendly tone and audience, resonated with Linda Hartzwell, the Artistic Director of Seattle Children’s Theatre. She saw the staged reading at the Kennedy Center, reached out to the creative team, and secured the rights to present the world premiere production. Seattle Children’s Theatre presents professional theatre for children with a focus on new works, and as of 2015 they have produced over 110 world premieres for young audiences (“About Us”). The company provided the environment necessary for the continued development of *James and the Giant Peach* into a family friendly musical.

The creative team took what they had learned from previous productions and continued to make changes to the material throughout the rehearsal and preview process at Seattle Children’s Theatre. McDonald reflected on the tonal shift in an interview:

We initially thought the show needed to be dark, and so we wrote some pretty scary stuff. But it didn’t feel right. It was too dark, too weird, too cold. So we

worked to find a better balance, and that took a willingness to toss out what wasn't working and write anew. (qtd. in Music Theatre International)

Other adjustments were made to help transition the material to appeal to a younger audience. Pilobolus was replaced by more traditional theatrical design conventions to create the world of the play. Fully realized sets and costumes were combined with puppetry to depict the trickier moments of the story Pilobolus previously worked to overcome. Puppets were used to represent the insects before they became anthropomorphized and to help illustrate the many feats of the peach, particularly its landing on the Empire State Building. The puppetry also became integral to lessening the severity of scarier moments, such as James' parents being eaten by the rhinoceros in a dream sequence ("Behind the Scenes").

Both the creative team and production team worked continuously to find the "lightness in the dark" (Pasek qtd. in Ouzounian) that became a stylistic touchstone of the world premiere production. A fully re-envisioned *James and the Giant Peach* opened at Seattle Children's Theatre on November 22, 2013, for a ten-week run over the holiday season. The result was a hit with both reviewers and audiences. Driven by a "blithe catchy score" (Berson), the show was quickly being touted as Pasek and Paul's *James and the Giant Peach*, overwhelming McDonald's significant revisions to the libretto.

Using a full complement of technical theatre opportunities—as opposed to the Goodspeed production's suggestive costumes and set—helped audiences suspend their disbelief and follow James' journey. Instead of the audience imagining the physical world of the play, technical elements were used to create the world for the audience in a more traditional sense. The technical aspects enhanced the "whimsically magical feel to the show" (Irwin).

By far the most resounding success came from the updates made to James' aunts Spiker and Sponge, "who completely walk off with the show" (Irwin). Every review praises the over the top comic relief provided by the aunts who "come off as horrid hoots" (Mee). This is the most significant character change from the original production at Goodspeed, and perhaps the most influential to the overall tonal shift between productions. Rory Graves, reviewer for *ParentMap*, states "I haven't seen such riotously likeable villains since Carol Burnett played Miss Hannigan in *Annie*," which is high praise for villains in theatre for young audiences.

The aunts' characterization is indicative of the significant tonal shift the writers had made to the show. Gearing the musical toward a more family friendly tone and structure solidified its future. The writers did not completely sacrifice the inherent darkness of Dahl's story but created a version that "stays true to the author by not talking down to children, and not sugaring up a story that finds its own zigzag route to a happy ending, after some (often humorous) travails" (Benson). The only criticism in reviews hints at a missed opportunity to appeal to the adult crowd. Ultimately, the team's work resonated with audiences, just as Dahl's book had, by using themes of friendship and family to "draw the audience (young and old) into the magical story" (Sutcliffe).

Despite its success, the show never made a move to New York City for a variety of reasons, including Dahl's estate reserving the professional stage rights to the novel. Still, plans were made to release a limited-edition cast recording featuring Broadway performers. An all-star team was assembled including Megan Hilty, Christian Borle, Brian d'Arcy James, Mark Kudish, and introducing Luca Padovan as James. The recording was released in 2015 as a permanently free download to help "get kids really

excited about musical theatre” (Paul qtd. in Levitt). It serves as a benchmark of the show’s appeal and success as well as a reference for the creators’ musical intent.

Workshop productions and revisions proved vital to the success of *James and the Giant Peach*. Despite initial leanings toward a dark movement-based musical, the team eventually found its way back to Dahl’s roots and embraced a younger audience. The result is a musical with multi-generational appeal that focuses on building friendships, finding a family, and the adventures life brings.

Problems—Perceived and Otherwise

Problematic Moments or Scenes

- 1) The introduction of James is in one musical line, after which, he rejoins the ensemble. The moment must be significant, but not overshadow Ladahlord’s exposition.
- 2) James must interact with only the insect puppets for entire scenes. The reactions and blocking of the puppets must be as realistic as possible to inspire genuine reactions in James.
- 3) “On Your Way Home” is a song of questions that must be posed truthfully by James as if he expects an answer and believes that answer would solve his problems. Otherwise, the song does not drive the character or plot forward.
- 4) Although the music remains the same, there must be a distinct shift in “Property of Spiker and Sponge” from pretend pleasantness to downright cruelty after James is left alone with his aunts for the first time.

- 5) James trusts Ladahlord within two lines of dialogue. There must be some moment of recognition or curiosity about this stranger who offers a magic potion that solves problems.
- 6) Reporters are present as soon as the peach is fully grown, despite the fact that no time has passed.
- 7) James is not alarmed when he meets the human-sized talking insects until he believes they intend to eat him. There must either be an inherent belief that talking insects are possible or a delay in James' awareness of the situation.
- 8) Grasshopper and Ladybug's flirtation must be brief and not take focus away from James when they comfort him after his nightmare, which should also serve as foreshadowing.
- 9) The pace must be quick and consistent through "I've Got You" to honor the moment of comedy that Spiker and Sponge offer, but also to quickly return back to the action on the peach.

Problematic Actions

- 1) Spiker and Sponge must be clean and precise pick-pockets, leaving no doubt that they pulled off their crimes. This action could easily go awry without careful choreography and planned contingencies.
- 2) Sponge must knowingly decide to eat a spider she has killed. Motivating this moment is important.
- 3) The magic potion must be made within a bag and then spill out. Various props go into the bag, but only the green glowing crocodile tongues come out when it is spilled. There are no scenes or offstage moments in between these events.

- 4) The peach grows as an integral part of a scene without blackouts, scene changes, or passage of time to cover the effect.
- 5) The peach rolls over Spiker and Sponge. The aunts survive the event, meaning staging must leave this possibility open while leading the audience to believe they are dead.
- 6) Centipede falls from the peach while it is in the sky, but lands in the ocean. For James' rescue of Centipede to make sense audiences must understand that although the peach is in the clouds it is also very close to the ocean.
- 7) The peach must land on Spiker and Sponge and kill them. This must be executed carefully, but also more realistically, than when it runs them over in act one.

Problematic Character Interpretations

The characters must simultaneously be larger than life and grounded in reality. No matter how fanciful they are, they must be driven by actual desires based on their given circumstances. Extra table work may be required to ensure a character's objective is the impetus for his or her actions within the musical. This is especially true for Aunts Spiker and Sponge, who should walk the line between comically villainous and unequivocally scary. The characters are specifically written to be over-the-top in order to eliminate fear and elicit laughter from an audience. However, they must still seem like villains or the audience will root for them instead of being pleased at their demise.

Particular attention should also be paid to James, who must be represented as youthful, yet not juvenile or childish. He is a smart and resourceful young boy whose experiences have, unfortunately, taught him he is useless. Although his story is heartbreaking at times, he must not be depicted as an intrinsically melancholy character.

Grasshopper and Ladybug become James' adoptive parents at the end of the musical. If the script's suggested doubling is employed and these actors also portray James' birth parents, special care must be taken so that the Grasshopper and Ladybug do not assume their parental roles too quickly. The correlation between the characters should be evident, but like the other insects, their rapport with James should develop over the course of the show.

Problematic Interpretations Caused by Actors Who Have Previously Done This Role

The show is a recent release, and as it did not have an extended run at a major New York theatre, there is not an association of any one actor with a particular role. However, as with any musical, the original cast recording can lead some actors to imitate the recorded actors or make the same choices. The director should encourage the actors to use this recording merely as a reference and focus on their own interpretation of the role. Their performance should be coached to be motivated by actions, objectives, and tactics, not on replicating a recorded version of the musical.

Problems Posed by Casting Difficulties

As scripted, the show is male heavy in terms of casting. However, the provided alternate keys open up the possibility for a girl to play James. In addition to gender, age also poses the greatest difficulty for an educational company to produce the show. James, his parents, his aunts, and the insects would all be played by actors of relatively the same age. The director must work with the actor playing James to portray him as younger than the rest, while also not appearing too juvenile. He is a boy coming into his own, and not a child.

Problematic Representations of Race, Gender, Religion

Race, gender, and religion are not referenced in the text or themes of the musical. The characters could be played by any race, although one would want to be mindful of adding commentary on race based on casting choices; for instance, two women of a particular ethnicity as the villainous aunts. However, if casting the best actor for the role is adhered to, this should not be a concern.

Problems Posed by the Themes of the Text

The themes of loss and abuse may prove triggers for the actors or audience. The script adeptly handles both subjects in a manner appropriate for theatre for youth. James' loss should be treated as a significant and life-altering event without overriding the upbeat tone of the musical. The script handles the abuse by making it comical, such as being forced to scrape toe jam or shave hair off a back. This helps bring levity to these situations and should be embraced. Nevertheless, James and the audience must believe the aunts are inherently bad people, so that when their death leaves James relieved, his virtuousness is not questioned.

Problems Posed by Genre

The script was written with the intention of being performed for young audiences, yet the play contains darker moments than one would typically encounter in a musical for children. Therefore, it is important that marketing contain appropriate cautions and age recommendations. This ensures that audiences can self-select should parents be uncomfortable with the darker themes of the musical. It also allows these themes, which are central to both plot and character development, to be performed without compromise or alteration.

Problems Posed by the Status of the Text

There are three different versions of this musical adaptation: a Junior script, a Theatre for Young Audiences script, and the full-length musical script; yet each functions independently of the others and is complete in its own right. There are no complications due to the multiplicity of the versions.

Complications may arise due to the status of the source material. Roald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach* has become a beloved children's novel. Its popularity has inspired many other adaptations, including a major motion picture in conjunction with Disney. When mounting a production, one cannot ignore the status of the source material and its adaptations. Nostalgia has the ability to influence audience perception of the musical adaptation, yet it is key that the production is driven by the events and circumstances presented in the script.

Problems Posed by Dialects

The musical is written to be performed in a British dialect for most performers. The majority of the characters make use of a traditional Received Pronunciation accent, the standard accent of Standard English in the United Kingdom, while the Aunts use a cockney accent. Once the action moves to New York City, the inhabitants use an American accent. The one character written with no particular dialect is the narrator, Ladahlord. As narrator, he serves as the connection between the audience's world and the world of the play. To enhance this connection, Ladahlord is best served by a dialect matching that of the typical audience member—in this case, American.

Problems Posed by Pronunciation

Most pronunciation questions are solved by the dialect, yet Ladahlord does manipulate common words to make his own, such as “fan-tas-ma-rific” and “remark-ulous,” which James echoes later in the musical. It is important that the actors pronounce these words similarly.

Problems Posed by Need for Adaptation

As previously mentioned, three adaptations of the musical are readily available for licensing through Music Theatre International, which allows directors to choose the approved adaptation best suited to their particular production needs and available resources. Other accommodations and adaptations may be necessary for technical and scenic elements. These are addressed in more detail in following sections.

Problems Posed by Unusual Linguistic or Rhetorical Styles

As narrator of the story, Ladahlord speaks in a variety of styles depending on his current situation. When narrating, his style naturally becomes more descriptive of the events acted out on stage. The colorful narrative style must not transcend the importance of driving the action forward. Once he is an active part of James’ story, his dialogue matches the style of the other characters and does not pose problems.

Problems Posed by Music or Need for Musical Score

The score is provided with the script so there is no need to create a musical score for the production. The score does feature a large orchestra and a variety of song styles, making accomplished and well-rounded musicians paramount to a production’s success. Should the resources for an orchestra be unavailable, the need for an orchestra could be

fulfilled by licensing recorded tracks for the score of the show provided by companies such as The MTPit and Aztec Tracks.

Problems Posed by Scenic Requirements

The scenic demands are very simple and sparse at the beginning of the play. Only a solitary ghost light is called for in the opening of the show. A bed is rolled on to represent the orphanage, and Spiker and Sponge's house is only seen in the distance while the action takes place in their garden. The largest challenge is after the giant peach is revealed. Once the peach has grown to its full size, it must be represented by a set piece that can accommodate actors outside, inside, and on top of the peach. The peach also has actions of its own: growing, falling, rolling, floating, sinking, and flying. It would be overly ambitious to expect the set design alone to solve these expectations, and as such, it could be addressed through special effects, actor movement, or other technical theatre design elements in the production.

Problems Posed by Special Effects

Magic is discussed throughout the musical, but only appears once in the form of the slithering crocodile tongues potion James makes with Ladahlord. The script indicates that the potion must give off a green glow, and when it is dropped, the individual green tongues should appear to move across the stage. The peach's movement and action should also be considered as special effects, as they may present a solution for how to stage these significant events. Puppetry, used to represent the insects before they swallow the potion, offers a solution for both the slithering tongues and the peach's movement. Puppetry is a very particular skill, however, that takes adequate rehearsal time in order to be effective.

Problems Posed by the World of the Play

The play exists in a world that blends reality with the fantastical. The physical settings are known: London, Dover, the Atlantic Ocean, and New York City in the year 1959. It is also a world where the whimsical is possible; a peach can grow to a prosperous size, and insects can exhibit human traits. The production must encourage the audience's suspension of disbelief for the events of the world to make sense.

Applications

Technical Preparation: Limitations and Advantages of the Venue

This production of *James and the Giant Peach* was mounted in Theatre Two, the black box theatre, at Gunston Performing Arts Center. The space has an open floor plan and flexible audience seating that can be reconfigured using moveable risers. A thrust configuration, with audience on three sides, was decided upon for this production. This was based on two considerations: 1) this arrangement provided the highest audience capacity, and 2) it allowed for a partially unit set without blocking audience views, which was preferable due to the modest budget for the production.

The black box was a shared space for both professional and community productions in Arlington County. Black curtains on tracks were configurable to create various backstage areas, and a variety of lighting equipment and sound equipment was available. Although the backstage area was limited, the combined dressing room and green room was conveniently located off an entrance upstage left, giving actors and crew more space when needed. The space also allowed for the utilization of multiple entrances to the stage, including the downstage right corner through the audience aisle.

Space in the backstage cross over was limited, so actor entrances and exits needed to be planned to minimize the need for cross overs. In addition, the thrust configuration combined with limited backstage area necessitated placing the band in the house left corner between two sections of the audience so as not to block the playing space. This placement required some forethought to mitigate sound balance issues, as the speaker locations did not allow for the use of personal body microphones for actors.

The black box space in the thrust configuration placed audience and actors in close proximity to each other as the audience surrounded the action. Aligning with the meta-theatricality and larger than life essence of the *James and the Giant Peach* script and score, the performance venue was ideal for a responsive, audience-inclusive, and intimate production.

The Set

The script of *James and the Giant Peach* takes place in multiple locations, and only revisits one location once, Spiker and Sponge's house. Due to the limitations of space and lack of a fly system at the venue, the set designer used an eight feet book with pages that turned as an alternative to traditionally flown backdrops. The book was built with painted Lauan flats that were hinged together to allow for the turning action to occur. Combined with smaller movable scenic elements—a bed for the orphanage, a bench for the boardwalk, lounge chairs for the cruise ship, and a stem for the top of the peach—the set design allowed for maximum use of space while still indicating to the audience a change of location.

The special effect of the peach growing was a particularly creative component of the set design. The peach that grew was removable from the tree and built in three

different sizes: a tennis ball size, a large exercise-ball size, and a large scenic flat size. Finally, four curved outlines were made which added onto the large flat sized peach to indicate yet another size. These four curved pieces could be moved to the outskirts of the stage space to help indicate to the audience when the action was taking place inside the peach.

The built and painted scenic elements were modeled on the illustration style in the first publication of the novel *James and the Giant Peach* by Nancy Ekholm Burkert. This furthered the production's idea that the audience is seeing a re-telling of James' story brought to life just for them. Instead of a crewmember, Ladahlord turned the pages of the book as he moved the show along, further solidifying for the audience his role as the purveyor of James' story.

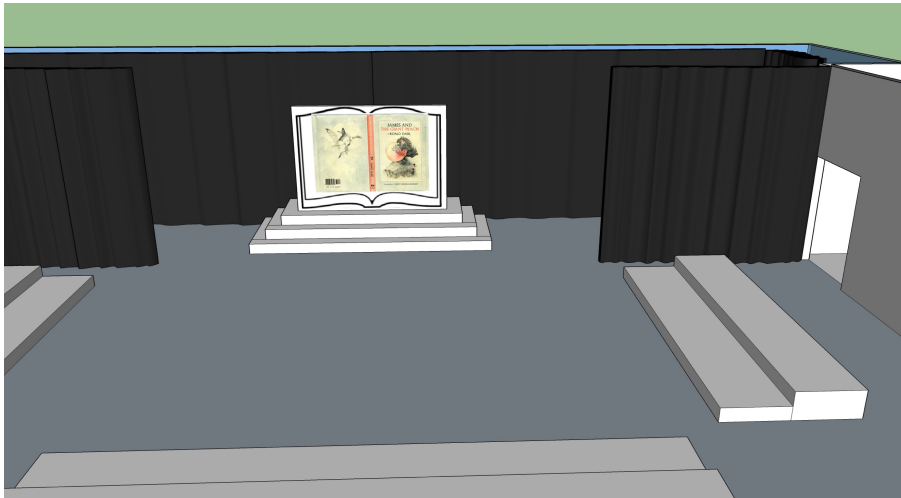


Fig. 5. Initial set design sketch: Prologue. Sketch by Kristen Jepperson.



Fig. 6. Initial set design sketch: Spiker and Sponge's house. Sketch by Kristen Jepperson.

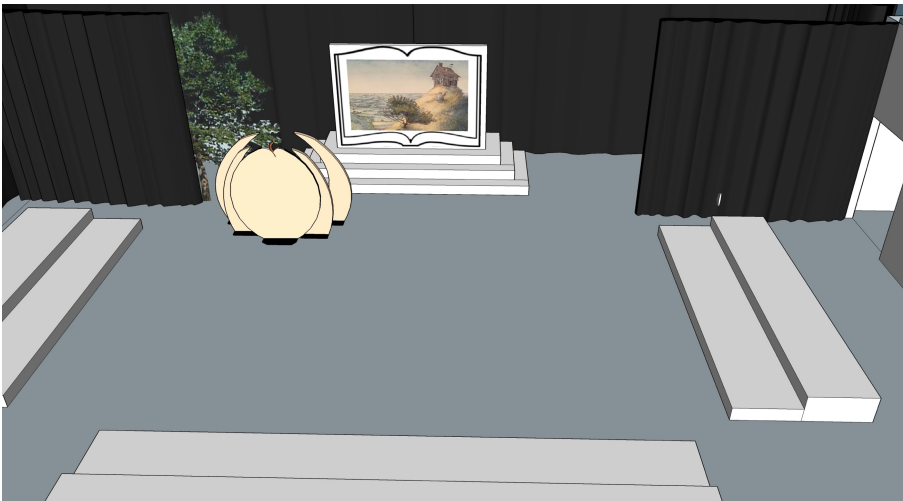


Fig. 7. Initial set design sketch: Fully grown peach. Sketch by Kristen Jepperson.

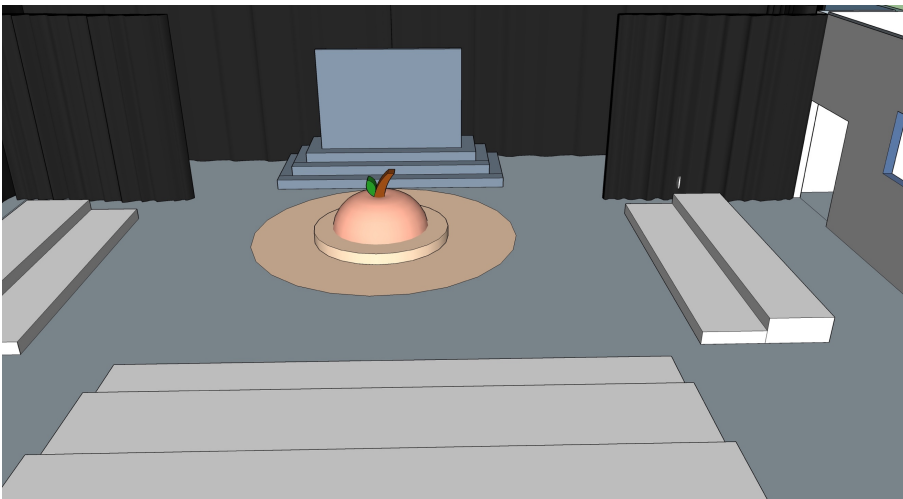


Fig. 8. Initial set design sketch: Top of peach. Sketch by Kristen Jepperson.

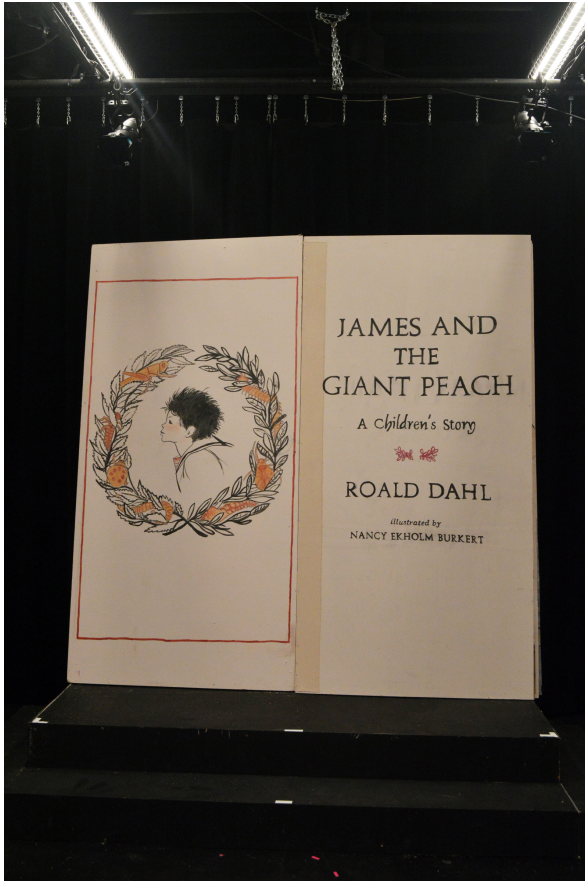


Fig. 9. Set picture: Title page of book. Photo by Larry McClemons.



Fig. 10. Set picture: Spiker and Sponge's house. Photo by Aileen Pangan.



Fig. 11. Set picture: Giant peach. Photo by Aileen Pangan.

The Lighting

The director decided early on that Ladahlord's control of the story would also be demonstrated through his control of the light in the production. The decision was made to cut the pre-show speech, which typically reminds audience members to turn off cell phones. Instead, after the house lights dimmed to half, Ladahlord's hand appeared in spotlight around the front of the book and snap cueing a complete blackout. Then throughout the production, Ladahlord cued lighting transitions by snapping his fingers or waving his hands. This use of lighting and signaling indicated Ladahlord's magical abilities and omnipotent power over the story as perceived by the audience.

Light design supported other magical moments of the show. For instance, the lighting designer built a cue where the lights of different gel colors flashed on and off rapidly, indicating that magic was occurring. Gels were also used to create a peach

colored wash that indicated both the inside and top of the peach, allowing the action to expand beyond the set pieces to fill the stage space while still giving clarity of place for the audience. Given the limited stage space of the black box, a repertory plot was hung and used as the basis for the light design. Specials were added to focus on key moments of the show such as Ladahlord by the book and James in the orphanage. Gel colors helped provide a sense of atmosphere as the story moved through both the darker and lighter moments of the script.



Fig. 12. Lighting picture: Peach wash. Photos by Larry McClemmons.



Fig. 13. Lighting picture: Blue wash. Photo by Aileen Pangan.



Fig. 14. Lighting picture: Magical lighting effect. Photo by Aileen Pangan.

Table 1
Lighting Cues

Encore Stage's
*James and the
Giant Peach*

Cue List

LD: Ian Claar
SM: Kara Fagerstrom
Board Op: Tara Hall

Updated: 4/6/18

Cue	Time	Effect	Trigger	Pg
0.5	5	Pre Show		
0.7	5	House to Half		
0.9 _{P1}	0	Blackout	on SNAP	
P2	3	Fade special		
1 _{P1}	2	US Sides	Start of Show	1
P2	0.5(2)	MS Sides		
P3	1.5(2)	DS Sides, dim front		
2	3	GI	COMPANY enters	1
4	5	Dim to night	Music slows	3
5	0	Shift cold, nightmare	on Snap	3
6	1	Focus down to James	JAMES sits up	5
7	3	Add colour	<i>On Your Way Home</i>	6
8	5	Restore	end of song	
9	3	Scene Change	end of scene	
10	3	Daylight GI	Scene I, ii	9
11	3	Accent	<i>Property of Spiker and Sponge</i>	11
12	2	Scene Change	end of song	15
13	3	Gloomy GI	Scene I, iii	16
14	3	Focus US	SPIKER and SPONGE exit	21
15	0	Freeze	on Snap	23
16	1	Restore	on Snap	23
17	3	Brighten	<i>Opening the Bag</i>	24

Table 1
Lighting Cues *Continued*

Cue	Time	Effect	Trigger	Pg
17.5	1	Magic FX	"..what to do."	27
18	0	Button	Button	29
19	3	Gloomy GI	Scene I, iv	30
21	3	Focus US	Peach appears	31
25	3	Peach special	Giant Peach Appears	32
27	3	Dingey Bright	<i>Money on that Tree</i>	33
28	5	Nighttime GI	Scene I, v	38
29	7	Brighten	<i>Middle of a Moment</i>	41
30	7	Brighten and Widen	Transition to Peach	42
31 _{P1}	0.2	Woosh	JAMES: "Cause there is magic"	42
P2	0.5	Mid Stage		
P3	1	Outer-stage		
32	3	Soften	Scene I, vi	43
32.5	3	Brighten	GRASSHOPPER: "...a little light, please?"	43
33	0.5	Wave FX	Peach begins to rock and move	47
33.5	3	Focus us	SPIKER and SPONGE enter	47
33.7	3	Restore	LADAH LORD moves ds	48
34	3	Restore	splash	49
35	2	Scene Change	JAMES: "...see for yourselves."	50
36	2	Peach special	Scene continues	50
36.1	2	Full area	*****FOLLOW*****	
38	3	Brighten	<i>Floatin' Along</i>	51
39	0	Button	Button	54
40	0.5	Fade to Black	end of act	54
40.5	5	INTERMISSION		
40.7	5	House to Half		
40.9	5	Fade to Black		

Table 1
Lighting Cues *Continued*

Cue	Time	Effect	Trigger	Pg
46	3	Move 1	Move 1	55
47	0	Blackout		55
48	0	Move 2	Move 2	55
49	0	Blackout		55
50	0	Peach special	Move 3	55
51	3	Brighten	<i>Have You Ever Began to Wonder?</i>	60
52	0	Button	Button	63
53	3	Scene Change	end of song	63
54	3	Gloomy G1	Scene II, ii	64
55	1.5	Accent	<i>A Cetaway for Spiker and Sponge</i>	65
56	3	Scene Change	end of song	67
58	5	Dim to night	Scene II, iii	68
59	0.5	Snap to Peach G1	JAMES sits up	68
59.5	3	Brighten	GRASSHOPER: "...if you please?"	68
60	10	Brighten	<i>Everywhere That You Are</i>	73
61	5	Scene Change	GRASSHOPER: "...long night."	74
63	3	Gloomy G1	Scene II, iv	75
66	5	Accent	<i>I Got You</i>	76
68	3	Restore	end of song	78
70	3	Scene Change	"Follow that peach!"	79
72	5	Peach G1	Scene II, v	80
73	5	Highlight book	SHARKS enter	80
74	0	Wave FX	"Woah"	81
74.1	1.5	Restore	*****FOLLOW*****	
76	3	Brighten	<i>Plump and Juicy</i>	84
77	3	Focus US	LADAH LORD enters	87

Table 1
Lighting Cues *Continued*

Cue	Time	Effect	Trigger	Pg
77.5	3	Restore	LADYBUG Speaks	87
78	5	Peach GI	JAMES and CENTIPEDE enter	90
80	3	Cool Brighten	Scene II, vi	92
82	3	Add gloom	SPIKER and SPONGE enter	92
84	3	Scene Change	end of song	94
86	3	NY GI	Scene continues	94
87	3	No gloom	SPIKER and SPONGE die	96
88	5	Focus to group	ALL group	96
90	3	Brighten and Widen	Welcome Home	97
91	1.5	Brighten	ALL: "Welcome Home"	100
92	0	Button	Button	101
94	1	Fade to Black		
96	3	Curtain Call		
97	3	Band Reference	ALL gesture at band	
98	0	Blackout	on SNAP	
100	5	Post Show		

The Costumes

The costumes were influenced by 1950s fashion. The costumer managed within their limited budget by pulling from Encore's stock, borrowing, building, and some

purchasing to accommodate actors who played multiple roles in the show. Each actor had a 1950s base costume for when they were just an actor or puppeteer, such as the opening number. As they took on additional characters, they added elements to the base, such as a trench coat for the reporters, or change costume entirely.

The anthropomorphized insects' costumes were also designed based on 1950s styles, but included elements representative of their insect. Ladybug wore a fit and flare dress that was red with black polka dots, Grasshopper sported a bowtie and newsboy hat to which his antennae were attached, and Centipede had a greaser inspired look with cuffed jeans, white t-shirt, and a leather coat with fringe to represent his hundred legs.

The decision was made for Ladahlord to be out of time from the rest of the characters, and his costume incorporated steampunk flair that highlighted his “other” status to the audience. He wore a top hat with goggles and gears and a long trench coat that suggested a Burtonesque take on the mysterious and magical character.



Fig. 15. Costume photo: Reporters. Photo by Larry McClemmons.



Fig. 16. Costume photo: Insects and James. Photo by Larry McClemons.

The Makeup

Due to the meta-theatrical nature of the show and the multiple character changes of the actors in the small ensemble, there was no specialty makeup used for this production. All actors wore basic stage makeup that highlighted their natural features to enhance the audience's ability to see them under the stage lights. Given the close proximity of actors to the audience in the black box venue, makeup was kept light and actors were able to opt out of wearing makeup if desired, particularly those playing male roles.

The Props

The script and style of the production required a large number of props. They ranged in style from realistic to matching the set's illustrated style, and even a few that purposely broke the established world of the play for comedic effect. The majority of props were gathered from Encore's storage. However, the production team did purchase or borrow some specialty items.

The most significant props were those used for puppetry purposes. The five main insect puppets were purchased from Mappy Oakley designs. These specialty designs allowed actors to develop unique movement for the individual insect puppets. Encore's props designer took on the creation of all other puppets for the production. The giant peach puppet was built off of an umbrella base and designed to match the peach that appeared in the set design. This allowed actors to depict the peach rolling, floating, flying, and falling. Additional puppets included seagulls, toy helicopters, and Oompa Loompas. The props and puppetry combined to add to the realistic feel of the world of the play created onstage, and their detail was imperative given the black box venue.



Fig. 17. Props photo: Insect puppets. “James and the Giant Peach Puppets.” *Mappy Oakley Designs*, 2018, mappyoakley.com/2017/03/16/james-and-the-giant-peach-puppets/. Accessed 23 Sept. 2018.



Fig. 18. Props photo: Oompa Loompa puppets. Photo by Kelsey Meiklejohn.



Fig. 19. Props photo: Seagull puppets. Photo by Larry McClemmons.



Fig. 20. Props photo: Giant peach puppet on the ocean. Photo by Larry McClemmons.

The Sound

Due to the comprehensive musical score, which included sound effects, and the lack of microphones for the venue, there was no specific sound design utilized for this production. In the spirit of the meta-theatricality of the script, when additional sound cues or effects not provided in the musical score were needed, the band worked to create them with their instruments. This primarily included additional scene change music, adapted from music included in the score. No pre-show or intermission music was used for this production.

Special Effects

All special effects noted in the script were carried out under other areas of design. The set took on the growing peach, the props handled the puppetry, and lighting cues highlighted magical moments.

The Budget

The production budget for *James and the Giant Peach*, not including staff contracts, was \$1,350. This was a modest budget, accounting for the fact that the show was being produced in a black box and that some props, costumes, and set pieces could be pulled or repurposed from Encore stock. Puppetry had the largest budget at \$500 since the insect puppets were of a specialized nature, assisted by a grant the company received to fund the puppetry work throughout the season. Costumes and makeup had a combined budget of \$450. While this budget took into consideration the multiple costume pieces required for each actor, the sizes and period styles needed for the production well exceeded those available in the stock at Encore. Both the need for adult sizes for high school students, not regularly required for Encore shows, and the need for period pieces meant that the costumer had to borrow pieces from other companies in order to stay within the show budget. Since props relied heavily on constructed pieces or pieces adapted from stock, they were able to stay within their \$100 budget.

The set designer had a more limited budget considering the amount of scenery in the production. Despite being in a black box venue, the set still required clearly defined locations. Although many pieces were repurposed from stock, additional items needed to be created solely for this production. Carved and painted foam helped to keep costs down while still matching the illustrated look of the rest of the set pieces. The design relied on the central book set piece for backdrops, combined with one or two suggestive elements to indicate the multiple locations in the script. Many of the smaller suggestive elements were sourced for free from Craigslist or borrowed from cast and crew members.

Auditions

Given the dual nature of the Musical Theatre Intensive (MTI) program, as both a class and cast of a fully realized performance, the start of the program was devoted to coaching students through preparation for a professional musical theatre audition. Students were given a copy of the script and vocal book for *James and the Giant Peach* as well as access to the limited-edition cast recording. They received instruction on how to use these resources to determine both which characters they would be best suited for based on type and vocal range, as well as consideration of which characters would stretch their abilities. Classes next focused on coaching actors how to choose an audition song that matched the style of the show and their preferred character while still allowing them room to build new skills. Each actor's chosen audition song was workshopped to help the actors activate the character in the song as they pursued their objective. Students also received workshops on cold readings for audition scenes and dance auditions.

Actors auditioned using a musical theatre song of their selection with an accompanist. During the initial audition, actors were coached to try in at least one other interpretation of their song to test their ability to take direction. A dance audition also took place using a thirty-two-count combination from the production's planned choreography. Although there were no major dance roles in the show, the dance audition served two purposes. First, it enabled evaluation of actors' movement ability. Second, it provided an opportunity for students to engage in another skill-set inherent to musical theatre.

Following auditions, the production team held two rounds of callbacks. Every student was called back for one role, many for multiple roles. In callbacks, actors were

asked to prepare and sing songs from the *James and the Giant Peach* score as well as present scenes from the script. Since the show was produced as part of a class, all actors who enrolled in the class were cast in a role. Callbacks were vital to ensuring not only the selection of the best actor for each part, but also that students were given parts that would allow them to grow as actors participating in a musical theatre class focused on enhancing their performance skills. Despite workshopping the audition material with the students prior to the auditions, there were many surprises for the production team concerning the results of the auditions and final casting.

Ultimately, actors clearly fell into three categories. The first was actors approaching musical theatre for the first time who needed more training. Second was experienced musical theatre actors transitioning from ensemble into secondary and lead roles. Finally, the class contained some experienced musical theatre performers who were ready to stretch their abilities. These students could be relied upon to simultaneously enhance the production while further developing their skills in any role from ensemble to lead. This range of abilities meant that casting was based on a mixture of adequate training to take on the demands of the role, embodiment of the character, and readiness to be stretched as a performer.

The broad age range in the script and the high level of skill required by secondary roles in *James* differed from a typical musical production, and impacted casting. The show requires one lead actor who can portray a young boy, and a second male lead that can read as a timeless, magical man. Also, the insects, who are secondary characters, have the most demanding music and dance requirements of the show. This unconventional distribution of challenging material led to the most versatile and

experienced performers being cast in supporting roles that allowed them to explore new character types and build their weaker abilities, such as harmonizing and dance. On the other hand, actors who were new to musical theatre or only had ensemble experience faced the new undertaking of playing a lead.

Rehearsal Journal

Week 1: December 4

The first rehearsal following casting was a read-through of the script, which allowed actors to begin developing an understanding of their character's journey through the show. As the read-through progressed, actors began to imbue the text with more meaning as they discovered more about the characters. The director posed the question "why do this show now?" to the entire ensemble, encouraging actors to expand their perspective beyond their role to the overall message of the show. In their responses, actors cited the themes of acceptance and family, specifically what comprises a family and how family is defined in modern society.

Actors were also encouraged to share general observations and questions that came up in this reading of the script. Most questions revolved around the special effects and technical aspects, such as how the peach would grow and how the slithering crocodile tongues potion would be concocted. Another actor perceived from Ladahlord's dialogue that it was clear the plot is the true story of James' life and not simply a tall tale made up by the narrator. They furthered this observation by stating that this knowledge would likely influence the approach the actors would need to take in sharing that narrative with the audience.

Students also shared observations and questions about the specific characters. One actor noted that Ladahlord was an anagram for Roald Dahl, and that was part of the reason why Ladahlord had so much control over James' story. Actors agreed that Spiker and Sponge were distant relatives of James, if related at all, and not a clerical error on the government's part. The students agreed that James was "instinctively trustworthy" of others, possibly to his detriment, and that he exemplified the innate curiosity of a child still young enough to believe in magic.

Week 2: December 11

The second rehearsal focused on learning music and harmonies for the opening number of the show "Right Before Your Eyes." Given the advanced nature of the class, the director set the expectation that soloists would work on their music outside of formal rehearsal hours and come in with questions. Actors approached this music rehearsal with timidity, especially when faced with complex harmonies. The music director began coaching them into the harmonies by building the cords in the score one at a time and then elongating them to phrases that could be strung together. Several of the experienced soloists struggled to hold their vocal lines against the other parts, but by the end of the rehearsal, both soloists and those with harmonies gained some confidence in their parts.

Week 3: December 18

As this was the last rehearsal before winter break, the focus was on solidifying the music and harmonies for "Right Before Your Eyes" so the actors could continue their work on it over break. Each soloist had clearly spent time reviewing their part with intention to fix sections they struggled with the last rehearsal. The group as a whole was still struggling somewhat with the harmonies, showing no improvement from the

previous week. Students were encouraged to ask questions and be honest about their level of understanding. Techniques were introduced to help students navigate working on the material at home, including recording their vocal part and running the sections slowly note by note to ensure mastery before speeding the sections back up to tempo as a whole phrase. The actors progressively got stronger at self-assessing and identifying the parts they were struggling with, asking questions of the music director to replay harmony lines. They left with a thorough understanding of the number and how to practice it over the break for continued improvement.

Week 4: January 3

The first rehearsal back from winter break focused on music review for “Right Before Your Eyes” as well as introducing the music for the dance number “Shake It Up.” A high number of conflicts meant that these songs would need another rehearsal to catch up absent actors. The low turnout allowed more time to focus individually on those who were still new to holding complex musical harmonies. Additionally, the director used the rehearsal to begin acting work, starting with character building exercises. The actors were guided through a lead point exercise to help them begin to find physicality for their characters. Many of the actors keyed into how this work could help them differentiate the various characters they would play clearly for an audience.

Week 5: January 8 & 10

These rehearsals continued the work on music for “Right Before Your Eyes” and “Shake It Up.” It was clear that many of the actors had been doing outside work to ingrain their harmonies. However, the balance of the ensemble sound was not falling into place and it was paramount that the actors have the music locked in before adding

movement, which would complicate the singing. The actors were still hesitant in their approach to the music, which contributed to the balance issues. The music director used an exercise with them holding hands in a circle, and focusing on directing their sound at a central point. This allowed them to begin to hear the blend of the harmonies together. Another exercise was used where the actors ran before singing. This forced them to physically exert energy that carried into the vigor with which they produced sound. Not only did this elevate the energy and projection of the music, but the lack of hesitancy in their approach following running naturally led to more accurate pitches among the cast. When they held back from fear of being wrong, their breath support was stunted, and they could not achieve the desired pitch. Many actors carried this idea of supported breathing into their approach to the music.

Week 6: January 15, 17, 19

This week focused on beginning to block the first act of the show while simultaneously continuing music learning for soloists. Staging the opening number, “Right Before Your Eyes” took a bulk of the time due in part to its complexity, but also because as the first staging rehearsal of the show it was a chance to orient the actors to working in a thrust space. By the second rehearsal of the week, dedicated to ingraining and fine-tuning the opening number, most actors were successfully self-assessing mistakes and troubleshooting solutions. Scene and song work revealed that the cast as a whole was still learning to trust their instincts and their abilities. With coaching and encouragement through the week, the actors began to bring more of their ideas to the table and to incorporate character choices into their initial scene work. The director introduced dialects to the actors so they could integrate the accents into their character

and rehearsal work immediately. Some students were reticent about this new challenge, adding another aspect that would require coaching and confidence building by the production team.

Week 7: January 22 & 24

The actors needed additional unanticipated review time for the material covered thus far in the rehearsal process, setting the rehearsal schedule back somewhat. Following this initial review, the week was focused on continuing blocking for the first act of the show, including learning music and staging the musical numbers. Some of the more experienced actors began to make strong character choices without director coaching as they became more familiar with the material. Other encouraging progress included a small number of actors taking the initiative to warm themselves up before rehearsal and working their material when not being actively used in rehearsal. These observations pointed to the ensemble beginning to take ownership over their part in the rehearsal process as well as their growth as musical theatre performers.

Week 8: January 29 & 31

The production team used this week to continue teaching the remaining material in act one. The team also impressed upon the actors the importance of their outside review work, as the necessity for repeated review time in rehearsal was worrisome in an already tight rehearsal schedule. The actors proposed, and the director agreed, that Ladahlord was a grownup James retelling his own story. This revelation proved the actors were continuing to further connect with their characters as they moved through the rehearsal process.

Unfortunately, there was a significant delay during the “Money On That Tree” music rehearsal due to the complicated rhythms of the song. The actors were not making progress throughout the rehearsal and, ultimately, the music director simplified the harmony in the song to accommodate for the musical abilities of the actors to prevent and further delays. Of further concern, although the students had been making significant strides in character development, the same growth was not being seen in the music or dance for the show. Each music and dance number required more time than was planned to review the material until actors were comfortable with it on their own.

Week 9: February 5 & 7

At this point, it was becoming increasingly clear to the production team that the actors were not working on their show material between rehearsals. It was again stated to students that they were expected to put in outside time preparing their material for the show, including memorizing lines as well as reviewing blocking, dances, and music. When actors ran the number “Money On That Tree,” which they learned just the week before, there was no indication of continued growth or mastery of the music and dance. This delayed the planned rehearsal for this week and meant another day was needed to focus on reviewing previously taught material. After the actors became self-aware of their lack of preparation and dedication to date, they compensated by becoming more active in the rehearsal process, taking more detailed blocking notes, recording harmonies, and asking questions about the dances. They even began to seek each other out as resources during breaks or time they were not working with the director or music director. With this newfound comradery and trust in the ensemble to boost each other, the

rest of the material for act one was taught to students with the expectation they would practice on their own before the next rehearsal.

Week 10: February 12 & 14

Following the trend of last week's rehearsals, this week continued to build on the ensemble working together to better themselves as a whole. As they problem solved trouble spots, they began to show growth as individuals as well. Despite the unexpected need to replace an actor this week with someone outside of the class, they continued to build upon the work they had been doing on solidifying harmonies, lines, and dance steps. The need to help a new actor catch up allowed the group to review all of act one in its entirety. This review reinforced to the actors that having confidence in the dance steps, vocal parts, and lines was the only way they could take their work to the next level and truly begin performing it as they would for an audience. This confidence also allowed actors to work on segments of the show on their own and further develop their characterization if they were not being actively utilized in rehearsals. Knowing that time was running short and the incorporation of a new actor would take some director focus, a group of students offered to block the number "A Getaway for Spiker and Sponge" in order to maintain rehearsal process momentum. This initiative was indicative of a turning point in the actors' understanding of how to self-assess and build their abilities in music, acting, and dance through rehearsal.

Week 11: February 19, 21, 23

This week the production team first set aside time to work music and characterization with soloists and then continued refining act one and catching up the new actor. The solo rehearsals stood out as incredibly productive, and the students

thrived under detailed, one-on-one time with the music director and director. It was clear the soloists had reviewed the material in anticipation of the rehearsal and were ready to delve into more specific technique work to elevate trouble sections.

In addition, the music director worked with soloists to make the best choices for their voices in terms of both safety and character. For example, the actor playing James and the music director decided together to use the alternate keys for the second half of the show for James, simultaneously honoring his changing voice and serving the story by demonstrating James' journey from boy to man. Additionally, the binary nature of the Earthworm's gender as a character created the opportunity for Earthworm, played by a female in this production, to choose the octave in which to sing.

The rehearsals faltered once they pivoted to the whole ensemble in an off-book run of act one at the end of the week. While the scene work held together despite line memorization issues, most of the group numbers suffered from unreviewed music and staging. Every actor self-assessed the need to continue their work outside of the limited classroom time in order for the show to succeed as time was running short to rehearse act two.

Week 12: February 26, 28, March 2

Work for act two music, scenes, and dances begun in earnest this week, with the majority of the work falling on the actors playing the Insects. This was a significant change from the first act where every scene included the majority of the ensemble. The Insects discovered that their harmonies were the most demanding in the musical with tight dissonance, scat stylings, and differing harmonic lines for each individual. More rehearsal time was needed to ensure the actors were confident in the rhythms and

harmonies, and although the Insect group was filled with the more experienced musical theatre actors in the cast, they still struggled with the advanced demands of the material. Actors showed initiative by recording the music work and dance steps, as well as running lines and vocal parts over breaks. Other actors were allowed time to work individually on lines, music, or dances during the rehearsals if they were not working with the director or music director. They worked diligently, helping each other as needed, and demonstrated the strong sense of ensemble growing amongst the cast. Actors began to observe that their work was stronger when every member of the ensemble was giving the rehearsal their best effort and dedication.

Week 13: March 5, 7, 9

This week the students were prepared to buckle down and work to complete the material for act two. It was an intensive week as they were learning music and then immediately learning the staging or choreography that went with what they sang, with little review time between. Due to their work ethic earlier in the week, time was available to complete a full music review of the show and answer any questions actors had regarding the songs. Music was the element of the show the whole ensemble was struggling with the most, with complex harmonies, changing rhythms, and navigating singing in a three-quarter thrust stage space where they could not always hear the other voices. Spending one rehearsal on dedicated to perfecting music allowed the students to hone in on mastering this one aspect without the split focus of performing the material.

Week 14: March 12, 14, 16

This week entailed an off-book run through of act two, rehearsing trouble scenes and songs, and then completing the first run of the entire show. Actors struggled with

lines, but were diligent in using breaks and pre-rehearsal time to run scenes and songs on their own. While this showed a level of awareness of the work needed to be done for the show to be successful, their lack of recall for the lines, music, and staging indicated more rehearsal time was needed with individual pieces to boost the actors' familiarity and confidence with the material. Once the production team allotted time to run problem scenes and numbers multiple times, the actors began to increasingly embody their characters, no longer shying away due to insecurity with the material.

Week 15: March 19, 21, 23

The final week before spring break, a rehearsal was lost to inclement weather, putting the production behind schedule. Nonetheless, the group completed detail and scene cleaning work on both acts, allowing the actors to refine their beats and objectives, solidify music and dances, and have any remaining questions about the material answered before moving to the performance space. Actors had failed to sufficiently review their material, specifically their vocal lines and choreography, in advance. They struggled to get through some of the musical numbers, which had to be reviewed in more detail than expected this late in the process. Many of the sections the actors struggled with were the same as those with issues in weeks before, demonstrating little progress or growth by actors over the rehearsal period.

Technical & Dress Rehearsals: April 2-5

Jumping into technical and dress rehearsals following a week off for spring break was a challenge. Although the students had been tasked with continuing to work on the material over break, some had failed to do so due to the conflicting priorities of family planned vacations and schoolwork. The additional pressure of adding in all of technical

elements including the band threw off some of the actors on lines and blocking during the first day. Fortunately, the use of the stage for load-in of set and lights allowed for a simultaneous sitzprobe rehearsal, where the actors sit and sing through the score with the band in order to focus specifically on integrating the two elements. This then enabled more time to be dedicated to technical elements such as a cue-to-cue run, as there was no need to stop to fix musical timing.

Due to a snow day on the scheduled design run, the lighting designer had yet to see the full staging. Therefore, instead of a traditional cue-to-cue where the stage manager would stop the actors and jump to the next lighting cue, sound cue, or scenic transition, the production team agreed on a “running cue-to-cue.” In a running cue-to-cue the actors and backstage crew would run the show in its entirety and, as the design team or stage manager need to fix or change something, they had the ability to stop the run to complete any needed adjustments. This in turn allowed actors a chance to run through the show after a long break without the pressure of full energy performances as the focus was on the design elements, providing a refresher of the show before the dress rehearsals began.

Dress rehearsals went smoothly except for a general lack of confidence and overall low energy of the actors, particularly on the more complex musical numbers. Notes continued to be given up until opening night. The notes initially focused on technique and, as final dress approached, they became more about character and performance energy. This transition in types of notes was made to facilitate a boost in actor confidence, encourage the students to focus on the performative qualities needed for a successful show. Their focus on the technical elements such as their vocal parts,

movement, and acting beats was drawing attention away from their characterization and performance energy. Unfortunately, this need to remain focused on technique revealed a lack of mastery of the required material for the show.

Performances

April 6-8 & 12-15

For the first weekend of performances, the students' energy was lower than ideal. The actors remained more focused on perfecting the delivery than conveying their character's objectives to the audience, resulting in internalized, non-presentational performances. Due to the class-based nature of the production, both the director and music director were allowed to give notes and work sections of the show before performances. Each day there was a half an hour of work time and fifteen minutes of warm-up time to prepare the actors for the performances. This dedicated work time proved the most valuable in the entire rehearsal and performance process. Following opening night, the first time the actors had an audience, the ensemble was much more responsive to director and music director feedback. Additionally, the actors were more capable of incorporating the notes and fixes after the opening performance, an unexpected product of the release of nerves following opening night.

As they moved into the second weekend, the actors' confidence grew and they began to settle into their characters and truly tell the story of the show. Characters began to feel fully embodied to audience members, harmonies fell into place, and dance numbers became more energized as the focus of the actors moved from internal concern about being correct to external focus on affecting and reacting to the other actors onstage with them. This shift also eased the pressure to be perfect on vocal, dance, and acting

moments and this ease of approach to the material allowed the actors to trust their work and knowledge of the material. The performances became more accurate than when the actors were intently focused on getting everything right. The connection within the ensemble enabled individual actors to build upon the work of their fellow castmates to heighten the quality of performances among the entire cast.

*Visual and Textual Responses to the
Playscript*

Non-Literal



Fig. 21. Non-Literal collage. By Kelsey Meiklejohn.

Literal



Fig. 22. Playwright, Timothy Allen McDonald. *Music Theatre International*, MTI Enterprises Inc., www.mtishows.com/people/timothy-allen-mcdonald. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 23. Playwright, Timothy Allen McDonald. *iTheatrics*, itheatrics.com/our-team/. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 24. Songwriters, Benj Pasek (left) and Justin Paul (right). *Pasek and Paul*, 2016, pasekandpaul.com/about/. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 25. Songwriters, Justin Paul (left) and Benj Pasek (right), at work. *Theatre Jones*, Cloudbusting Media, Inc., 2009-2016, www.theaterjones.com/ntx/features/20140724150537/2014-07-27/QA-Benj-Pasek-and-Justin-Paul. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 26. Seattle Children's Theatre World Premiere Cast (left to right: Greg McCormick Allen as Grasshopper, Heath Saunders as Earthworm, Diana Huey as Spider, Kendra Kassebaum as Ladybug). *Playbill.com*, Playbill Inc., 2016, www.playbill.com/video/cast-of-revamped-james-and-the-giant-peach-runs-through-pasek-and-paul-tunes-com-224639. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 27. Limited Edition Cast Recording Actors (left to right: Megan Hilty as Ladybug, Christian Borle as Grasshopper, Brian D'Arcy James as Centipede). *Music Theatre International*, MTI Enterprises, Inc., 2015, www.mtishows.com/news/download-the-james-and-the-giant-peach-reference-recording-and-license-the-tya-show. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 28. Limited Edition Cast Recording Actor Luca Padovan as James. iTheatrics, *YouTube*, 2015, www.youtube.com/channel/UCuz_On7yfLAuajady-BZDqQ. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 29. Horn-rimmed glasses. "Twentieth Century Spectacles." *The College of Optometrists*, 2016, www.college-optometrists.org/en/college/museyeum/online_exhibitions/spectacles/twenty.cfm. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 30. Polka-dot scarf. "1950s Shoes and Accessories." *Vintage Dress Ups*, 17 Sept. 2009, vintagedressups.blogspot.com/2009/09/1950s-shoes-and-accessories.html. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



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Fig. 32. Women's fashion 1950s England. "Beach Chic: Photo Collection Documents the Changing Style of the British Holidaymaker." *Daily Mail*, Associated Newspapers Ltd., 4 Aug. 2011, www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/article-2022281/Brighton-beach-photos-Pictures-1920s-document-changing-style-British-holidaymakers.html. Accessed 5 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 33. British Matron Nurse 1950s. "Oh Nurse, How You've Changed." *Daily Mail*, Associated Newspapers Ltd., 30 Jun. 2008, www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1030666/Oh-nurse-youve-changed-The-women-whove-served-NHS-decade-experience.html. Accessed 5 Dec 2016.



Fig. 34. Dover, England countryside. Hedges, Karob. "Dover Countryside." *Digital Photographer*, Imagine Publishing, www.dphotographer.co.uk/image/9776/dover_countryside. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 35. Atlantic Ocean. "Atlantic Ocean." *Lemerg.com*, 2015, lemerg.com/699288.html. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 36. The Empire State Building, New York City. "10 Surprising Facts About the Empire State Building." *History*, A&E Television Networks, LLC., 29 Apr. 2016, www.history.com/news/history-lists/10-surprising-facts-about-the-empire-state-building. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 37. Seattle Children's Theatre marketing material. *Pasek and Paul*, 6 Nov. 2013, pasekandpaul.com/pasek-and-pauls-james-and-the-giant-peach-opens-in-seattle-on-november-21st/. Accessed 3 Dec 2016.



Fig. 38. Official website logo. *James and the Giant Peach*, Ravenscroft PR, jatgp.com/. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 39. MTI logo. *Music Theatre International*, MTI Enterprises, Inc., www.mtishows.com/roald-dahls-james-and-the-giant-peach. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 40. Adventure Theatre marketing material. *Suzanne Lane*, 2016, www.suzannelane.com/news-1/. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 41. World Premiere at Seattle Children's Theatre. "SCT's James and the Giant Peach is Magical Sweetness." *BroadwayWorld.com*, Wisdom Digital Media, 23 Nov. 2013, www.broadwayworld.com/seattle/article/BWW-Reviews-SCTs-JAMES-AND-THE-GIANT-PEACH-is-Magical-Sweetness-20131123. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 42. Pennsylvania Youth Theatre set design. *WP Show Services*, 2008-2009, www.wpservices.com/PYT.htm. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



Fig. 43. The Courtyard Youth Theatre production. "Youth Theatre's James and the Giant Peach—Review." *The Courtyard*, 9 Apr. 2015. www.courtyard.org.uk/%3Fp%3D1639657. Accessed 3 Dec. 2016.



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CHAPTER III

PROMPTBOOK

Given Circumstances

Environmental Facts

Geographical Location

James and the Giant Peach begins on an empty stage, using a meta-theatrical device to suggest that the overarching show occurs in the present. This play-within-a-play framework indicates that the show is taking place and being acted out by actors in the performance space itself. From there, the company of actors moves the story through various geographical locations. After a brief period of time in an orphanage in London, England, the story follows James as he moves in with his aunts in Dover, England. Once the gigantic peach is cut free of the tree in Spiker and Sponge's yard, the peach rolls off the cliffs of Dover and the action continues in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Finally, after being picked up by seagulls and flying through the clouds, the peach lands in New York City on top of the Empire State Building. The aunts stumble upon the peach on their own transatlantic journey and follow the peach to New York.

Date: Year/Season/Time of Day

The script specifies that James' story takes place in the year 1959. James asks his aunts if they can take a trip to the seashore to visit his friends (30) and the aunts return with sunburns, indicating James' story begins in summer. While the dialogue in the script

contains few mentions of time of day and duration of events, the stage directions in the script offer specifics. From when James leaves the orphanage to the giant peach's growing takes place over three days. Once the peach is free from the tree the scenes transition to provide glimpses of action that take place over several weeks.

Economic Environment

James' journey signifies a distinct shift in economic environments for his character. The flashback to his parents' death indicates he comes from a comfortable middle-class lifestyle. They could afford to give gifts to each other and travel from Dover to London to visit the zoo. Following their death, James is instead living in poverty at the orphanage, with nothing in his possession except the glasses and scarf that are the last remaining mementoes of his parents.

Once James is taken to live with his aunts in Dover, the living conditions of the lower class are seen. In order to "eke out a living" (9), the aunts have resorted to "doing whatever's necessary" (9), namely petty theft of tourists on the boardwalk. They are driven purely by the desire to make money as seen in their inquiry regarding how much they will get a week for taking care of James (14) and in the musical number "Money on That Tree" (33). Spiker and Sponge sign contracts offering them large sums of money for people to see the peach, indicating that the overall economy supports spending for entertainment purposes.

While one would assume the economic pressures of the human world do not apply to insects, once James is inside the peach his interactions with the insects reveal many parallels. Centipede's reference to his family business in the "sock and shoe racket" (71) suggests that an economic structure does exist within the culture of the insects. In

addition, Ladybug very clearly identifies herself as “royalty” (45), pointing to a class structure in the insect world that mimics the British class system.

Finally, upon building a home in New York City, the insects join the American capitalist system. Centipede becomes a shoe designer and Spider a bridge builder, whereas Earthworm becomes a social activist (98). Grasshopper and Ladybug are not given specific careers in the story, but as parents they are able to support “many, many children” (99). Overall the musical’s characters, including the non-human characters, situations reflect the economic environments of the time.

Political Environment

The year set by the script, 1959, places the events during the reign of Elizabeth II in England. Harold Macmillan was Prime Minister at the time and Eisenhower was President of the United States (“1959”). Both administrations were conservative and following the events of World War II the countries were strong allies. *James and the Giant Peach* relies on this strong relationship, with a Hollywood agent visiting the aunts in Dover presumably soon after hearing about the giant peach, with the aunts’ transatlantic trip to New York, and with the ability of these two British citizens to call on the U.S. air force for assistance in bringing down the peach. The script additionally reveals a corrupt police force in Dover, as they turn a blind eye to Spiker and Sponge’s theft when paid off. Once the insects have set up a home in the New York, Earthworm joins the social activism movement that is part of the American political culture of the time and forms “Bugs Against Insensitive Terminology” (98).

Social Environment

The social environment of *James and the Giant Peach* deals primarily with the relationship between characters and how social norms guide those relationships. After being orphaned, James is automatically given to his only living relatives. Since he is a minor, society considers him to be the property of his guardians with no say over his own situation. James himself follows these social cues, automatically obeying his aunts' instructions to sleep in a dirt cellar and endure hard physical labor, and generally suffering their mistreatment.

The social status of characters, both human and non-human, is intertwined with their class. This is particularly relevant for the insects, where the “pest” (60) Centipede is seen as separate and beneath the rest of the insects socially. Ladybug's royal status puts her above the rest, but she often defers to Grasshopper. Despite his not being royalty, she is able to marry him in the end.

James' social role changes significantly when he becomes part of the insect group inside the peach. He goes from a child forced to obey his guardians' rules to being treated as the equal part of a team whose opinions are valued. It is in this social role that he thrives and becomes a true leader and decider of his own fate. Overall, the script points to strong parallels between social structures in the human and insect worlds.

Religious Environment

Religion is never directly alluded to in the script. Grasshopper and Ladybug do get married at the end alluding to a religious ceremony.

Previous Action

The prologue of *James* indicates that the entire show is a re-telling of previous events. The convention established by the opening number is that Ladahlord, the narrator, is retelling a true story for the audience. In fact, outside of the prologue and epilogue, the musical's story consists entirely of previous events that are being reenacted by a "pack of actors" (3).

Prior to this action, James' parents have died in an accident involving a rhinoceros' escaping its enclosure at the London Zoo. James used to reside in Dover with his parents, but following their death, he has been living in a London orphanage. His aunts, Spiker and Sponge, have spent many years pickpocketing and stealing from people on the Dover boardwalk, and they avoid arrest by bribing a corrupt police force. Their home is near where James lived with his parents. Next to the house is a large dead peach tree that has not produced fruit in years, but which shelters a variety of insects.

Most of the insects in the peach tree have lost family due to Spiker and Sponge's penchant for killing insects. Grasshopper and Ladybug briefly recall losing loved ones, while Centipede paints a gruesome picture of mass casualties from fumigation. He also alludes to negative experiences with other humans, particularly little boys, and how they pull off legs and torture insects with magnifying glasses (71). Although not all the insects have lost loved ones at Spiker and Sponge's hands, each has witnessed their cruelty and experienced their hatred of insects. On a lighter note, Grasshopper harkens back to happier days before his life in the peach tree, where worries were non-existent and the freedom to travel provided adventure.

Polar Attitudes

James Henry Trotter

James Henry Trotter begins the musical as a lonely orphaned boy without a family or a place to call home. His life was turned upside-down by the tragic death of his parents. Upon being placed in his aunts' care, he is forced to live as a worthless laborer who is not even allowed to sleep inside. After this abuse and mistreatment, he undertakes an incredible journey by the end of which he has become a confident boy who trusts his instincts and has found his true family.

Spiker

In the beginning of the musical, Spiker is a jaded spinster stuck pick-pocketing with her unintelligent sister in order to scrape by in life. Her days have become a monotonous routine of working the boardwalk in Dover and trying to find ways to get rid of the pests that infiltrate their house and garden. Things change when James is put under her guardianship. Suddenly she has someone to thrust work onto, providing her and her sister with much deserved relaxation time. The giant peach is her ticket to a better life, with all the luxuries money can afford. Both the success of the peach and having James to perform tasks she detests are things the universe has sent her to repay her for all the hardships she has endured in life. By the end of her story in the musical, Spiker is assured of her claim to both the peach and James.

Dialogue

Choice of Words

The word choice of the dialogue reflects the fantastical and creative nature of the story, as well as the imaginative nature of the characters themselves. As the narrator of

the story, Ladahlord utilizes the most colorful and descriptive language, even implementing his own made-up words when the existing vocabulary fails to suffice. He employs words that create vivid images like “ooze” (23), “wonder spells” (24), and “terror-ific-ly” (49) to create a unique and inventive world.

Other characters’ word choice reflects their class and position in life.

Grasshopper, Ladybug, and James all use words that signify their position in the middle and upper classes and the accompanying comprehensive education. Grasshopper lists the scientific delineations of his class, order, and suborder (58) and Ladybug employs more refined words such as “respectable” (45), “nor” (50), and “remarkable” (92). James’ vocabulary is more proper than a typical seven- or eight-year-old boy, particularly the use of “mum” (8), “suppose” (51), and “aeroplane” (88).

Lower class characters incorporate informal slang into their dialogue. Spiker, Sponge, and Centipede all use intensifiers such as “bloody” (64) and “bloomin’” (60). Spider and Earthworm are also working-class characters, but do not resort to these base intensifiers. Instead, they choose more direct and simple words than those of the higher-class characters. This is seen in Earthworm’s declaration that he is “prone to fits of fear” (45) and Spider’s unmistakable threat to “separate your head from your torso” (45).

Choices of Phrases and Sentence Structure

Other than the invented words strung together by Ladahlord, the phrases and sentence structures are consistent throughout the musical and reflective of the dialect spoken by the characters. Ladahlord uses flowery, elongated sentences, and is one of the only characters to speak in large sections of uninterrupted text. This helps underscore his magical qualities and control of the story.

James' speech pattern notably changes over the course of the musical. At the beginning, he uses short phrases which often trail off in ellipses, indicating his intimidation in the presence of other authoritative figures. Centipede's rescue marks a distinctive turning point, as James immediately begins giving clear concise instructions. In previous moments of crisis, he had to be prompted to share his ideas after trailing off, and his growth in confidence is clearly seen in a shift in phrasing and sentence structure. By the climax of the show, his dialogue is mostly written in declarative sentences.

Choice of Images

Despite the use of images and symbols in the course of the musical, the dialogue itself does not often employ imagery. The glasses and scarf that belonged to James' parents are referred to a few times by various characters to help draw attention to their significance. The same is done for the rhino that murdered them, leading the audience to recall the pantomime from the opening sequence. A similar image is recalled by Spider when she discusses Sponge's eating her fiancé, another action seen earlier in the play.

The most significant use of imagery in dialogue comes from Earthworm and Centipede when they discuss the various types of monsters that might harm them on their journey. These include a "hairy scromp with a scary scream," a "ten-ton dreg with fangs on its feet," and a "slumbering scrunch" (52-53). These images help to populate the world of the play with creatures not known to humans, inspiring viewers to imagine the fantastical beasts.

Choice of Peculiar Characteristics

With the exception of Ladahlord, all characters in the show make use of a dialect. The story begins in England and the characters' specific dialect is most closely tied to

their class rather than region. Spiker and Sponge, on the lowest end of the class spectrum, are written in a cockney dialect. James and Ladybug speak in received pronunciation, a dialect widely associated with formal speech and educated speakers. Other characters exhibit an assortment of variations between the two. For example, Centipede mostly follows received pronunciation, but his dialect is peppered with incomplete consonant endings on certain words, shifting some phrases closer to a cockney dialect.

Although Ladahlord does not have a dialect he has his own distinctive mode of speech. His language is dramatically colorful, but most evocative are the words he combines to make his own when no regular word will suffice. This adds to his whimsical nature and helps draw attention to the imaginative aspects of the show. Ladahlord's creative use of language inspires the creativity and imagination required by the audience to bring the story to life.

The Sound of the Dialogue

The dialogue mostly consists of short direct phrases, but each character group has a unique sound quality. Ladahlord exhibits the only verbose and flowery language in the play, and his elongated words stand out from the rest of the dialogue. Spiker and Sponge use hard consonants and short vowels, creating a clipped pace to their sharp language that sets them apart as the story's antagonists. James transitions from an unsure question-filled tone to one of certainty and directness. Ladybug and Grasshopper have a refined, clear sound that soothes those around them. Centipede's rough speech mirrors his gruff demeanor, Spider switches on a dime between comforting and biting, and Earthworm's fitful nature creates a pitch variance that also plays on the fact that the character is both male and female.

Structure of Lines and Speeches

There are only two long speeches in the script. Ladahlord has larger chunks of dialogue when he is giving instructions to James regarding the slithering crocodile tongues potion, and Centipede gives a lengthy retelling of how he lost his family at the hands of Spiker and Sponge. The remainder of the dialogue is relatively short in length, facilitating a natural conversational tone between the many characters and allowing for a shared focus on all characters. Although the story does follow James and his journey, this structure of equal sharing in dialogue promotes the script's theme of teamwork and the group dynamic of a family.

Dramatic Action

All page numbers below refer to Music Theatre International's version of Timothy Allen McDonald's *James and the Giant Peach*.

Units and Summary of Action

1. Unit 1: "Adventure Awaits" (pages 1–3)
 - a. James: to tempt the audience with great adventures.
 - b. Spiker: to frighten the audience with her presence.
2. Unit 2: "All Alone" (pages 4–7)
 - a. James: to stifle his loneliness.
3. Unit 3: "Eviction" (pages 7–8)
 - a. James: to brace for meeting his new family.
4. Unit 4: "Atrocious Aunties" (pages 9–15)
 - a. James: to impress his aunts.
 - b. Spiker: to enamor and delude those around her.

5. Unit 5: “Home, Sweet, Home” (pages 16–21)
 - a. James: to delight in a new home.
 - b. Spiker: to assert dominance over James.
6. Unit 6: “Magic Collision” (pages 21–29)
 - a. James: to plan a way to escape his abusive aunts.
7. Unit 7: “Wake Up Call” (pages 30–33)
 - a. James: to evade telling Spiker and Sponge about the magic potion.
 - b. Spiker: to chastise James for failing to complete his tasks.
8. Unit 8: “Eighth Wonder of the World” (pages 33–38)
 - a. James: to appease his aunts.
 - b. Spiker: to propagandize the peach for monetary benefit.
9. Unit 9: “Broken” (pages 39–41)
 - a. James: to challenge authority of Spiker and Sponge.
 - b. Spiker: to shatter James’ self-worth.
10. Unit 10: “Moving Through” (pages 41–42)
 - a. James: to create a new fate for himself.
11. Unit 11: “Insect-roductions” (pages 43–47)
 - a. James: to uncover the truth behind the peach and insects.
12. Unit 12: “Runaway Peach” (pages 48–49)
 - a. James: to redirect Spiker and Sponge’s focus to escape from abuse.
 - b. Spiker: to block James and the peach from leaving her empty handed.
13. Unit 13: “Setting Sail” (pages 49–54)
 - a. James: to embrace the unexpected.

14. Unit 14: “Are We There Yet?” (pages 50–58)
 - a. James: to diffuse the building tension of a long journey.
15. Unit 15: “Learn Something New” (pages 58–63)
 - a. James: to confront his ignorance about insects.
16. Unit 16: “Giant Problem” (pages 64–67)
 - a. Spiker: to evade capture by the authorities.
17. Unit 17: “Lost But Not Gone” (pages 68–74)
 - a. James: to honor feelings of grief and loss.
18. Unit 18: “Sisters, Sisters” (pages 75–78)
 - a. Spiker: to revel in luxury and a successful escape.
19. Unit 19: “Peach Pursuit” (pages 78–79)
 - a. Spiker: to rally spirits and plan to get the peach back.
20. Unit 20: “Trouble at Sea” (pages 80–87)
 - a. James: to cajole Earthworm into being bait in order to save the group.
21. Unit 21: “In the Clouds” (pages 88–89)
 - a. James: to relish the adventure.
22. Unit 22: “Man Overboard” (pages 89–91)
 - a. James: to rescue Centipede.
23. Unit 23: “Empire State Attack” (pages 92–94)
 - a. James: to dodge Spiker and Sponge.
 - b. Spiker: to reclaim the peach.
24. Unit 24: “Confrontation” (pages 94–96)
 - a. James: to prevent harm to his insect family.

- b. Spiker: to threaten James and the insects into getting both James and the peach back in her control.

25. Unit 25: “Family” (pages 96–97)

- a. James: to console Centipede.

26. Unit 26: “It Was All True” (pages 97–100)

- a. James: to celebrate finding a home and family.

27. Unit 27: “Closing the Book” (pages 100–101)

- a. James: to charm the audience with a final goodbye.
- b. Spiker: to entreat the audience for forgiveness.

Characters

James Henry Trotter

1. Desire. James wants to be part of a loving family and have a place where he belongs. The death of his parents landed him in a lonely orphanage where he believed he had no family left to care for him. When family is found, he discovers they are cruel and abusive toward him. Throughout the show, he must decide what family means to him and whether he will accept the abusive treatment at the hands of his aunts or work to find a place where he is loved and truly belongs.
2. Will. James has a strong will that has been compromised following the death of his parents. He was raised to be respectful, particularly of authority and his elders, and this suppresses his strong-willed nature in the beginning of the musical. Over the course of the show, with the encouragement of the insects, his true nature comes out as he problem solves, takes charge, and stands up for what he believes.

3. Moral Stance. Family is of the utmost importance to James, as is feeling included. His entire journey is about finding a loving family. In the end, he is able to stand up for such a family because fighting for those who care for others is important to him. Although he does not express grief over Spiker and Sponge's death, he does question if his feeling of relief is acceptable. This points to a strong moral compass that values the lives of all but understands the positive repercussions of their death. He also values fairness and inclusiveness as demonstrated by his willingness to forgive Centipede's ranting and railing against humans. James is able to see through Centipede's words to the pain of losing his family and thus forgives his actions.
4. Decorum. James is a young boy who has just experienced a traumatic loss. He is seen by others as alone and sad. He acts respectfully and obediently to all those he encounters, even when they treat him discourteously. His intelligence and leadership qualities come into focus through the support and encouragement of the insects, and as a result James becomes the person they turn to in a crisis.
5. Summary Adjectives.
 - a. Intelligent
 - b. Forgiving
 - c. Respectful
 - d. Resourceful
 - e. Empathetic

6. Initial Character Mood Intensity.
 - a. Heartbeat—elevated and rising indicating fear
 - b. Perspiration—cold and damp from bad dream
 - c. Stomach—uneasy and empty
 - d. Muscles—tense and shaky
 - e. Breathing—rapid and gasping

Spiker

1. Desire. Spiker wants to have enough money to live comfortably without having to work anymore. She has been working the boardwalk as a pickpocket for as long as she can remember with her sister. To Spiker, amassing riches is the way to a better life where she no longer needs to worry about getting caught stealing, keeping up a house, or managing a sister.
2. Will. Spiker is a strong-willed as they come. She knows what she wants and will do anything to achieve it. This translates into the manipulation of others through cajoling or even abuse, forcing others she believes are beneath her to do things that will help her to get what she wants. This quality has allowed her to scrape by in life so far, so she sees no reason to stray from her scheming ways.
3. Moral Stance. Spiker's morality stems from her selfishness. Such is the case when James comes under her and her sister's care. He suddenly becomes a means for her to escape all of the mundane work that needs to be done. She also operates under the impression that you only get out of the world what you take from it. This belief allows her to steal, pay off corrupt policemen, and abuse a little boy without an inkling that any of her behavior is inexcusable under societal norms.

4. Decorum. Spiker has been dragged down physically as well as emotionally by the world. Her sister refers to her stench and her “Frankenstein face” (77) and these are outward expressions of her inner self. Others find her to be demanding, brusque, and unsettling, but in general she is allowed to continue in her ways without a second thought due to her intimidating presence.
5. Summary Adjectives.
 - a. Cruel
 - b. Unscrupulous
 - c. Conniving
 - d. Tough
 - e. Selfish
6. Initial Character Mood Intensity.
 - a. Heartbeat—strong and steady
 - b. Perspiration—light but odoriferous
 - c. Stomach—iron strong
 - d. Muscles—tense
 - e. Breathing—easy and shallow

Idea

Literal Meaning of the Play's Title

The title of the musical *James and the Giant Peach* refers to the two central characters of the story. James is the lonely orphaned boy who encounters magic that enables him to escape his life with his abusive aunts. This magic results in a giant peach, which James in turn enters and which rolls him away to a new adventure.

Symbolic Meaning of the Play's Title

The title highlights the possibilities the giant peach opens for James as well as its significance for the other characters in the story. As soon as the peach appears, its presence spurs James on his journey to a new home and family. Along that journey, the peach continuously provides James with exactly what he needs whether it be sustenance or a vehicle to convey him away from his sad existence with his aunts. For Spiker and Sponge, the peach first brings them wealth then ultimately leads to their demise. Finally, it offers the insects a vehicle for travelling both on the ocean and in the clouds, and its pit offers shelter as a permanent home in New York City.

What is the Play Literally About?

The orphaned James Henry Trotter, a young boy without any family, is suddenly put in the care of his two aunts. After facing abuse and mistreatment, he discovers magic at the hands of a mysterious man. When the magic spills out of the bag, it reaches a peach tree and the insects that live nearby. A giant peach grows, and the insects become human-sized speaking versions of themselves. James finds himself inside the peach and befriends the insects on an unexpected journey across the Atlantic Ocean to New York City. Along the course of the adventure, he finds acceptance as part of a new unique family with the insects.

What is the Moment of Climax in the Play?

The climactic moment of the musical is when James finally stands up to Spiker and Sponge in New York City. In the heat of the confrontation when they are demanding not only their peach but also James back as their slave, they threaten the insects with fumigation. This threat to the lives of his new companions prompts James to declare,

“You are mean, nasty, horrible people. And you will not hurt my family” (95). In finally standing up to the play’s antagonists, he has overcome their ability to control and motivate his actions. The subsequent falling of the peach, which crushes the aunts resulting in their death, is the final punctuation to James’ declaration of who his true family is.

*Why Do the Characters Make
These Climatic Choices?*

James has developed a familial connection with the insects during their voyage on the peach. They have been supportive of him as a person and, ultimately, as a leader. Individually, they listen to his fears, encourage his ideas, and work to open his eyes to the richness of the world around him. Their obvious love and care for him as well as their support for him through crisis after crisis solidifies them as his true family. When his family is threatened he has no choice but to speak up in order to save them. Spiker and Sponge’s threat of “fumigating the bugs” (95) stirs James’ worst fear, losing his family and being orphaned for a second time. Therefore, he disowns Spiker and Sponge and declares the insects his family.

*What is the Result of the Climatic
Choices on the Other
Characters?*

James’ brave statement affects all of the principal characters in the story. Spiker and Sponge are so taken aback that they fail to notice the giant peach’s falling toward them and are killed by its impact. The insects, except Centipede, accept themselves as a family unit with each other and James. Grasshopper and Ladybug take on the role of parents with the rest as brothers and sisters. Centipede takes longer to come around to the idea of family because he feels unworthy of his place in the group, due to his earlier

desire to drive James away. After he is assured that he is a welcome member of the group, he also joins in and finds his place when he was previously all alone like James. The climactic moment results in characters getting what they deserve, similar to any fable or moralistic story.

Moods

All page numbers below refer to Music Theatre International's version of Timothy Allen McDonald's *James and the Giant Peach*.

Mood Senses and Mood Image

1. Unit 1: "Adventure Awaits" (pages 1–3)
 - a. Sight—a closed book.
 - b. Sound—tuning of orchestra.
 - c. Taste—cleansing sorbet.
 - d. Touch—velvet curtain.
 - e. Smell—dust rising from an old storybook.
 - f. Image—a solitary ghost light illuminating a spectacular circus.
2. Unit 2: "All Alone" (pages 4–7)
 - a. Sight—boy asleep.
 - b. Sound—fluttering of wings.
 - c. Taste—cold, mushy pottage.
 - d. Touch—rough scratchy sheets.
 - e. Smell—dank unwashed bedding.
 - f. Image—rows of boys sleeping on rusty cots.

3. Unit 3: “Eviction” (pages 7–8)
 - a. Sight—matron nurse towering over bed.
 - b. Sound—flickering on of lights.
 - c. Taste—morning breath.
 - d. Touch—soft sweater.
 - e. Smell—clean laundry.
 - f. Image—a hopeful boy headed home.
4. Unit 4: “Atrocious Aunties” (pages 9–15)
 - a. Sight—tourists strolling boardwalk.
 - b. Sound—waves, children playing on beach.
 - c. Taste—salt in the breeze.
 - d. Touch—sweaty skin.
 - e. Smell—humid air.
 - f. Image—black rusty motorcycle with sidecar.
5. Unit 5: “Home, Sweet, Home” (pages 16–21)
 - a. Sight—dilapidated house precariously perched on hill.
 - b. Sound—crows circling.
 - c. Taste—damp thick air.
 - d. Touch—rough tree bark.
 - e. Smell—dirt.
 - f. Image—family portrait with parents replaced by grotesque women.
6. Unit 6: “Magic Collision” (pages 21–29)
 - a. Sight—bursts, swirls, and flashes of light and smoke.

- b. Sound—twinkle of magic.
 - c. Taste—pop rocks candy.
 - d. Touch—smooth glass of potion bottles.
 - e. Smell—musty old potion book pages.
 - f. Image—glowing green slithering crocodile tongues.
7. Unit 7: “Wake Up Call” (pages 30–33)
- a. Sight—blinding sunlight.
 - b. Sound—piercing complaining voices.
 - c. Taste—grass and dirt.
 - d. Touch—dried, dead grass.
 - e. Smell—morning dew.
 - f. Image—towering aunts with bright red sunburns.
8. Unit 8: “Eighth Wonder of the World” (pages 33–38)
- a. Sight—giant peach bending tree branch.
 - b. Sound—cash registers.
 - c. Taste—sugary success.
 - d. Touch—crisp newly minted money.
 - e. Smell—ripe peach.
 - f. Image—people crowding each other for a view.
9. Unit 9: “Broken” (pages 39–41)
- a. Sight—only belongings of James’ parents shattered and torn.
 - b. Sound—tearing of fabric, breaking of glass.
 - c. Taste—bitterness of resentment.

- d. Touch—rough edges of broken glasses and scarf.
- e. Smell—burning anger.
- f. Image—shattered family photo.

10. Unit 10: “Moving Through” (pages 41–42)

- a. Sight—door on a peach.
- b. Sound—echo of cave.
- c. Taste—sweetness of freedom.
- d. Touch—sweaty palm.
- e. Smell—fresh clean air.
- f. Image—cavernous inside of peach.

11. Unit 11: “Insectroductions” (pages 43–47)

- a. Sight—shadowy figures.
- b. Sound—footsteps.
- c. Taste—chalky uncertainty.
- d. Touch—skin in strong handshake.
- e. Smell—new leather.
- f. Image—giant insects.

12. Unit 12: “Runaway Peach” (pages 48–49)

- a. Sight—countryside whizzing past.
- b. Sound—crashing and clanging of destroying fences and walls.
- c. Taste—bitter fear.
- d. Touch—squishiness of peach.

- e. Smell—chocolate from factory.
- f. Image—peach mid-course soaring over cliff.

13. Unit 13: “Setting Sail” (pages 49–54)

- a. Sight—open ocean.
- b. Sound—waves.
- c. Taste—salt water.
- d. Touch—wind through fingers.
- e. Smell—fresh air.
- f. Image—never-ending horizon as far as the eye can see.

14. Unit 14: “Are We There Yet?” (pages 50–58)

- a. Sight—ragged, weather-beaten sail.
- b. Sound—stomach growling.
- c. Taste—stale bread.
- d. Touch—tattered fabric.
- e. Smell—body odor.
- f. Image—individuals separated as far as possible in small space.

15. Unit 15: “Learn Something New” (pages 58–63)

- a. Sight—old friends in new light.
- b. Sound—string quartet and jazz scat.
- c. Taste—opening red wine.
- d. Touch—violin bow hairs.
- e. Smell—various notes of complex perfume.
- f. Image—band playing together in harmony.

16. Unit 16: “Giant Problem” (pages 64–67)

- a. Sight—flashing police lights.
- b. Sound—sirens.
- c. Taste—tinny remorse.
- d. Touch—hard luggage handles.
- e. Smell—sweat from adrenaline.
- f. Image—slow motion chase.

17. Unit 17: “Lost But Not Gone” (pages 68–74)

- a. Sight—stars twinkling in the sky.
- b. Sound—distant laughter.
- c. Taste—favorite comfort food.
- d. Touch—warm hug.
- e. Smell—perfume.
- f. Image—restored family portrait.

18. Unit 18: “Sisters, Sisters” (pages 75–78)

- a. Sight—rows of lounge chairs.
- b. Sound—ship horn.
- c. Taste—strawberry daiquiri.
- d. Touch—sleek railing.
- e. Smell—sunscreen.
- f. Image—beautiful cruise ship.

19. Unit 19: “Peach Pursuit” (pages 78–79)

- a. Sight—floating peach.
- b. Sound—waves lapping the boat.
- c. Taste—sharp alcohol.
- d. Touch—clenched fist.
- e. Smell—salt water.
- f. Image—face turning red with anger.

20. Unit 20: “Trouble at Sea” (pages 80–87)

- a. Sight—swarm of sharks.
- b. Sound—seagulls squawking.
- c. Taste—stale worry.
- d. Touch—soft feathers.
- e. Smell—perspiration.
- f. Image—white sky of seagulls.

21. Unit 21: “In the Clouds” (pages 88–89)

- a. Sight—puffy clouds.
- b. Sound—flapping of wings.
- c. Taste—cotton candy.
- d. Touch—fresh rain.
- e. Smell—clean breeze.
- f. Image—distant skylines from airplane.

22. Unit 22: “Man Overboard” (pages 89–91)

- a. Sight—body falling through the air.
- b. Sound—fading scream.
- c. Taste—acidic.
- d. Touch—tense muscles.
- e. Smell—sharp panic.
- f. Image—slack rope.

23. Unit 23: “Empire State Attack” (pages 92–94)

- a. Sight—Empire State Building.
- b. Sound—helicopters and sirens.
- c. Taste—dried prunes.
- d. Touch—sharp needles.
- e. Smell—pollution.
- f. Image—full military standoff.

24. Unit 24: “Confrontation” (pages 94–96)

- a. Sight—towering buildings and tourist crowded streets.
- b. Sound—sharp cutting laughter.
- c. Taste—syrupy fake sugar.
- d. Touch—prickly hair.
- e. Smell—rancid trash cans.
- f. Image—staring contest between two groups.

25. Unit 25: “Family” (pages 96–97)

- a. Sight—mom and dad.
- b. Sound—lullaby.
- c. Taste—balanced clean meal.
- d. Touch—supportive hand on shoulder.
- e. Smell—freshly baked bread.
- f. Image—complete family portrait.

26. Unit 26: “It Was All True” (pages 97–100)

- a. Sight—troupe of actors.
- b. Sound—laughter.
- c. Taste—scrumptious joy.
- d. Touch—holding hands.
- e. Smell—lavender breeze.
- f. Image—group hug.

27. Unit 27: “Closing the Book” (pages 100–101)

- a. Sight—book closing.
- b. Sound—snap out of light.
- c. Taste—refreshing water.
- d. Touch—smooth old leather.
- e. Smell—dusty book pages.
- f. Image—knowing smile on a stranger’s face.

Tempos

All page numbers below refer to Music Theatre International's version of Timothy Allen McDonald's *James and the Giant Peach*.

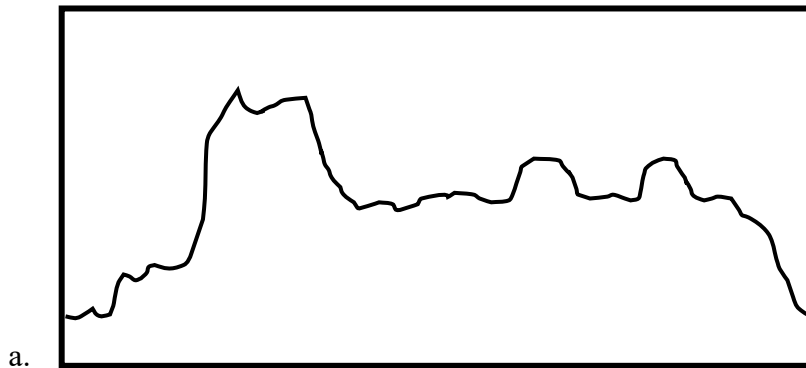
Tempo Charts and Descriptions

1. Unit 1: "Adventure Awaits" (pages 1–3)



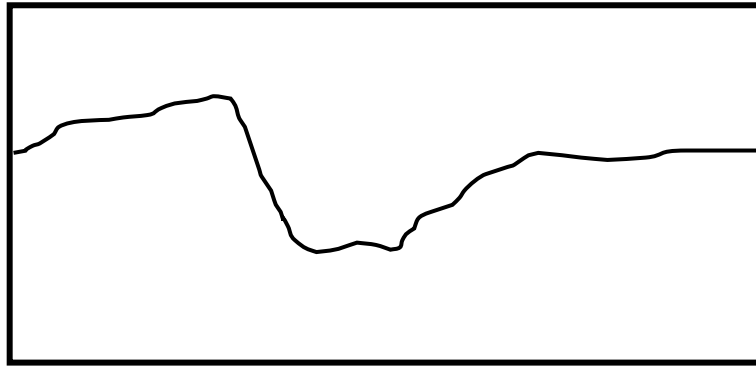
- b. Starts slowly as Ladahlord reveals the stage, picks up when the company enters and begins setting the scene unveiling all the components of the story and magical ways it will be told.

2. Unit 2: "All Alone" (pages 4–7)



- b. Calm and restful until James' nightmare about his parents being killed by the escaped rhino. The tempo relaxes once James is awake and his heart rate settles. It swells again at the unanticipated entrance of ladybug and grasshopper and returns to a calm and restful sleep.

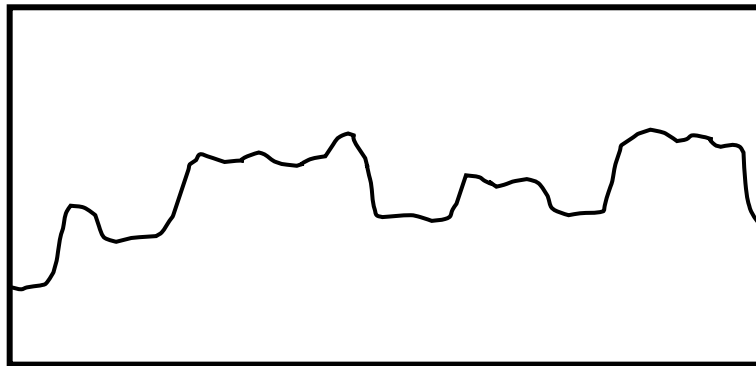
3. Unit 3: “Eviction” (pages 7–8)



a.

- b. The tempo begins quickly with a sudden wake-up call from the Matron Nurse who must rush James to the train station and his new family. As the Matron Nurse realizes James only has two belongings to pack in his suitcase the tempo slows down before it launches back into the rush to make the train.

4. Unit 4: “Atrocious Aunties” (pages 9–15)

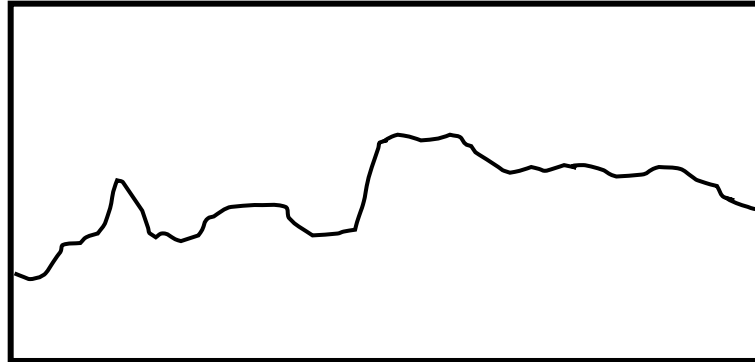


a.

- b. The scene’s tempo peaks and valleys mimicking the slower dialogue interspersed with up-tempo music. Ladahlord’s brief narration leads the scene in at a steady pace, which is quickly thrown off by the entrance of Spiker and Sponge on their motorcycle. The pace slows as Spiker and Sponge settle in for the day but ramps up again as they steal more and more. The policemen’s entrance and conversations slow down the action,

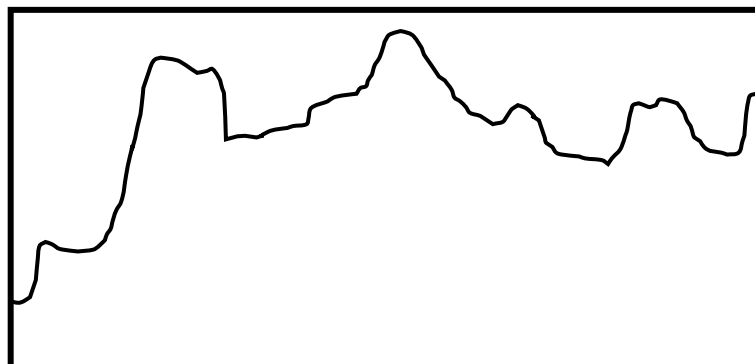
but it rises again once they are gone. The dialogue for James' delivery to them mirrors the same slow down but with a more vigorous pick-up as soon as they are alone and can enact their torturous ways on him. Finally, the leaving motorcycle helps bring the pace back to an even keel.

5. Unit 5: "Home, Sweet, Home" (pages 16–21)



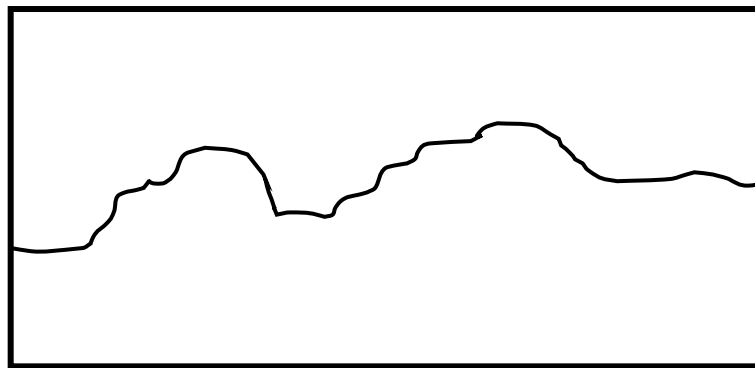
- b. The action maintains the even tempo of the last scene which then escalates when Spiker and Sponge demand the items from James' suitcase. Once they have returned his parents' items the pace slows down. It is again heightened when James discovers how nearby they are to his old home and friends. It rises dramatically when the spider lands on Spiker's head. The tempo dips once the spider is killed and remains fairly steady through Spiker and Sponge's leaving for the beach.

6. Unit 6: "Magic Collision" (pages 21–29)



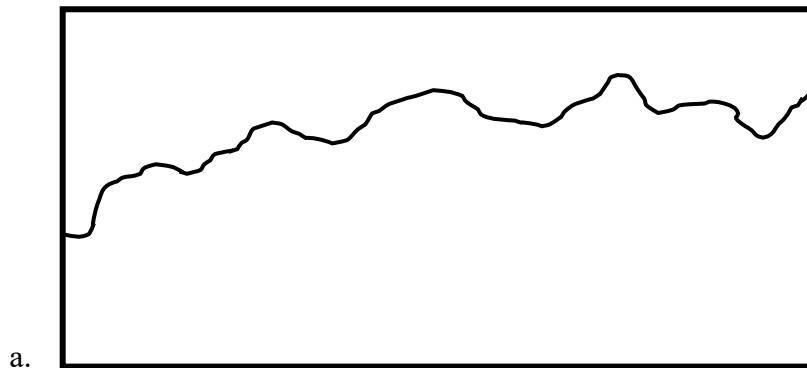
- b. Picking up from the last moment, the tempo starts lower as James prepares to cut down the peach tree. A small increase occurs when Centipede is chasing Earthworm followed by a leap to a furiously startling pace when James pulls Ladahlord, a complete stranger, out of the tree. This revelation combined with the making of a magic potion keeps the scene at a heightened tempo, except for the more deliberate and precise moments where Ladahlord is instructing James how to use the potion. Finally, the tempo climbs as the potion is spilled.

7. Unit 7: “Wake Up Call” (pages 30–33)



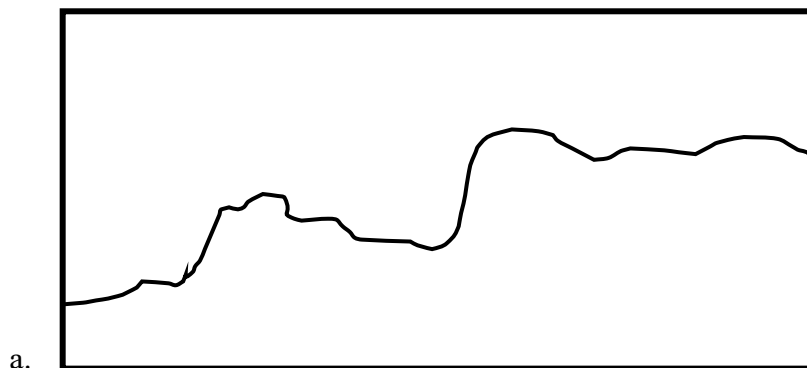
- a.
- b. Spiker and Sponge enter frustrated after their day at the seashore, which keeps the tempo up in the opening. The tempo rises when they consider throwing James down the well and then drops as they are distracted by a peach that has grown in the peach tree. It increases with each growth of the peach and even off as Sponge expounds on the peach’s wonders.

8. Unit 8: “Eighth Wonder of the World” (pages 33–38)



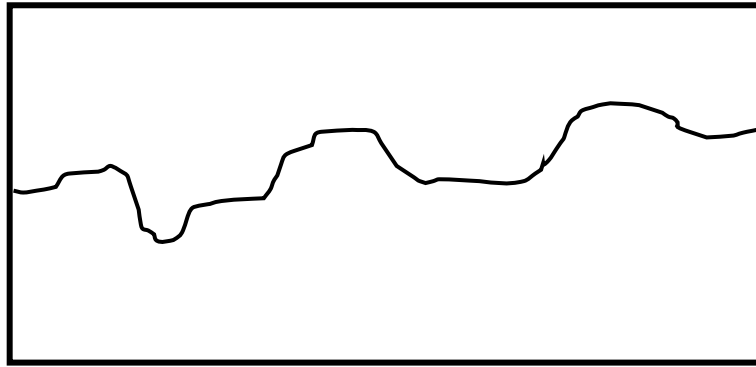
- b. The scene picks up tempo each time a new group enters to offer Spiker and Sponge a contract for the peach. While there are some fluctuations for the moments where Spiker and Sponge are secluded from the group, in general the tempo stays up reflecting the excitement and buzz of the moment.

9. Unit 9: “Broken” (pages 39–41)



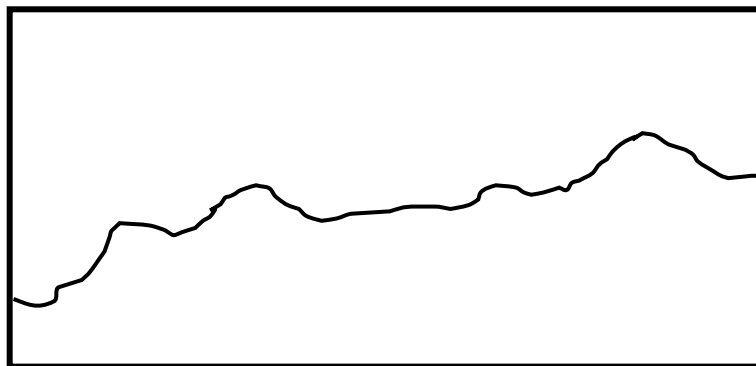
- b. Left to clean up after the excitement of the crowds visiting the peach, the tempo relaxes. It picks up as Spiker and Sponge continue to belittle James in his assertion that he made the peach grow. It comes to a climax when they break his parents’ items and leave him to sleep outside.

10. Unit 10: “Moving Through” (pages 41–42)



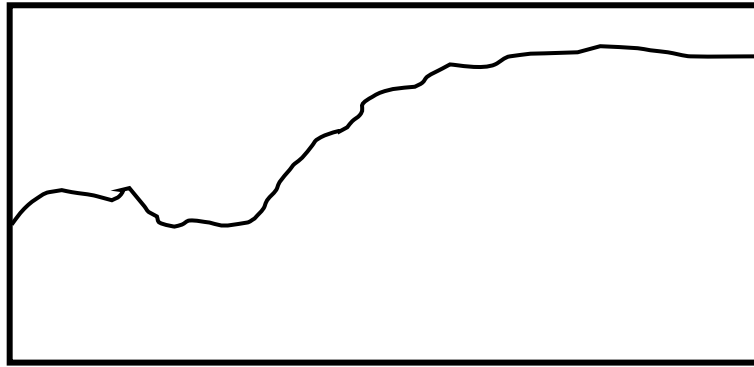
- b. Left alone, James is overcome by the feeling that his world has just been destroyed leaving him at a peak jumble of emotions which set the action off at a higher pace. Once he is able to settle in and think through his options it slows down, but his desire to take immediate action fuels the tempo increases until he finally goes inside the peach.

11. Unit 11: “Insectroductions” (pages 43–47)



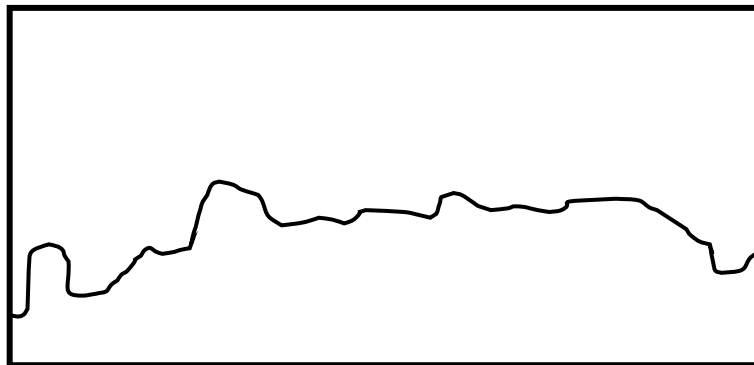
- b. The tempo of the introductions remains fairly consistent but has some swells for moments of discovery including when the giant insects are revealed and Earthworm freaks out. Ultimately the tempo is driven by the need to get away from Spiker and Sponge as soon as possible.

12. Unit 12: “Runaway Peach” (pages 48–49)



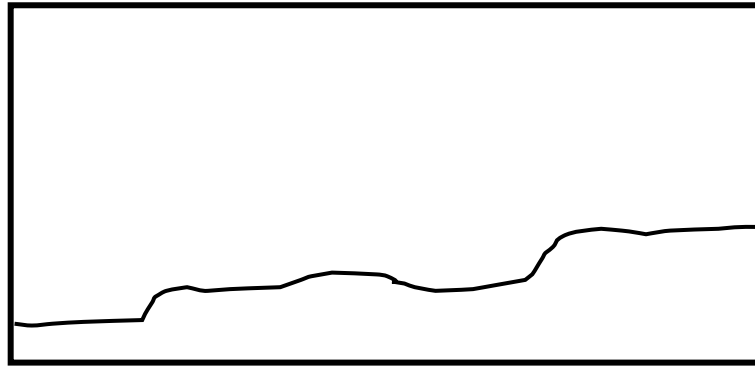
- a.
- b. At first everything is going according to plan to allow the peach to roll away from the hillside. However, the tempo accelerates with the peach, steadily climbing as it crashes through farms and buildings. There is a slight reprieve when Ladahlord almost switches to a different story, but the pace picks back up at the heightened state and maintains it until the peach lands in the ocean.

13. Unit 13: “Setting Sail” (pages 49–54)



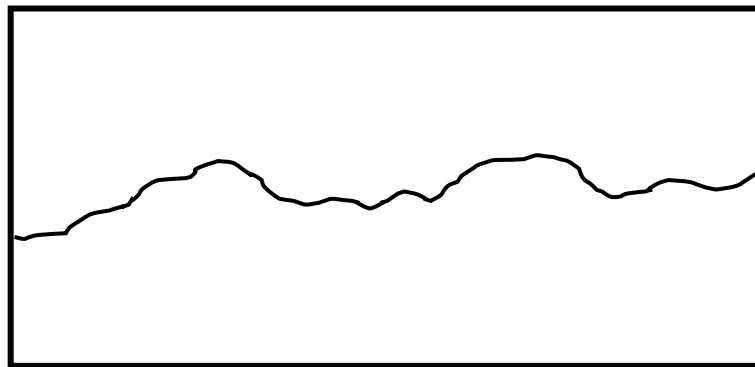
- a.
- b. After the peak fear upon discovering that they are floating in the middle of the ocean, the tempo regains a sense of calm reflecting that of a bobbing motion with the waves. Earthworm’s fears help to create some faster moments within the calm, but the tempo remains moderately smooth until it trails off as they settle in for the journey.

14. Unit 14: “Are We There Yet?” (pages 50–58)



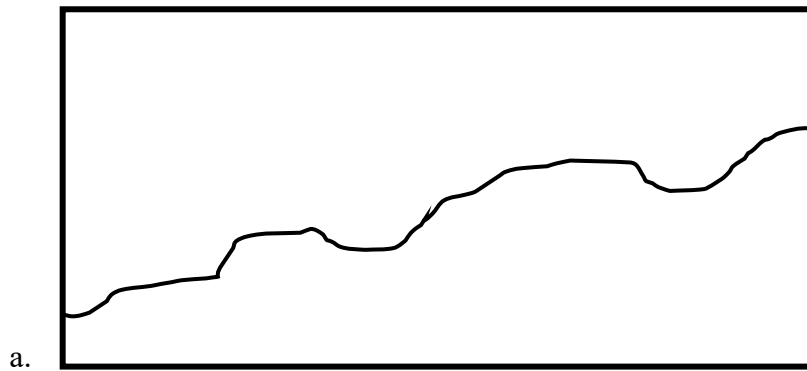
- a.
- b. Steady pace as time passes on the long journey. Jumps in tempo occur as the travelers get increasingly annoyed with each other’s behavior.

15. Unit 15: “Learn Something New” (pages 58–63)



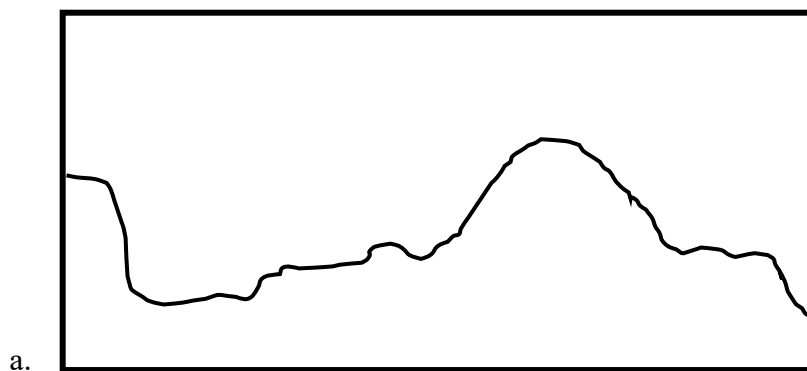
- a.
- b. The pace rises as Centipede grills James on his knowledge of insects. This drives the characters into song where the tempo slows to highlight particular facts and then increases to illustrate the joy created by the group truly working together for the first time.

16. Unit 16: “Giant Problem” (pages 64–67)



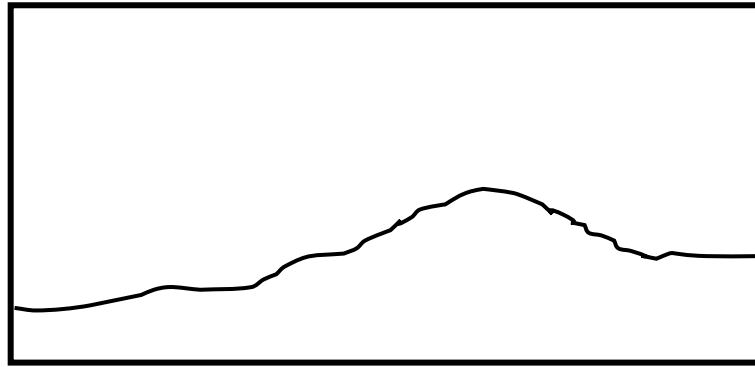
- b. Starting out with Spiker and Sponge’s recovering from being rolled over by the peach, the tempo is steady. Once the reality of the consequences of losing the peach settles in the tempo picks up until it leads into a frantic chase sequence.

17. Unit 17: “Lost But Not Gone” (pages 68–74)



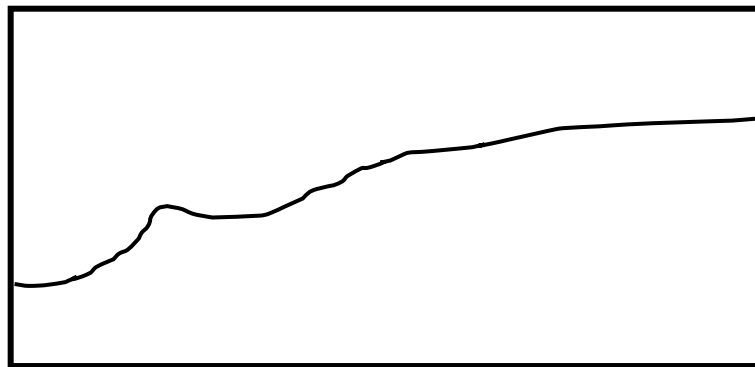
- b. A second iteration of the nightmare drives the pace at the top of the scene, followed by a calm soothing tempo afterward as James comes back to the present situation. Centipede’s insistence that all humans are terrible drives the climax of the scene, which again returns to a calm as the insects comfort James and reassure him that his parents are still with him. The tempo drops even further as sleep settles in.

18. Unit 18: “Sisters, Sisters” (pages 75–78)



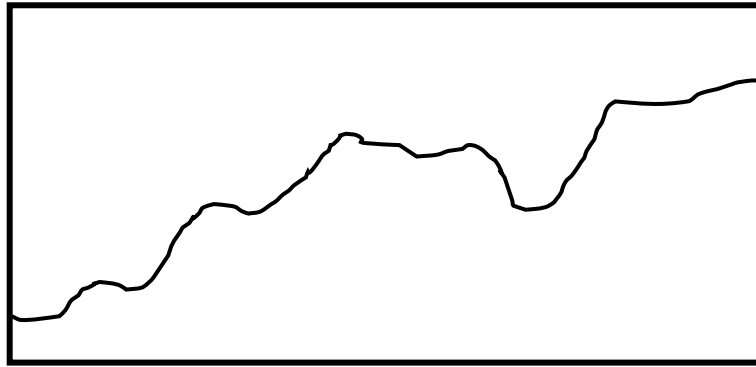
- a.
- b. The tempo is relaxed and calm as Spiker and Sponge relax on the cruise ship finding relief from escaping the police. A celebration of their teamwork and sisterly love raises the pace for a moment before it settles back into the relaxed state.

19. Unit 19: “Peach Pursuit” (pages 78–79)



- a.
- b. The relaxed pace of the cruise travel is disrupted when the Purser, who is Ladahlord in disguise, notices the giant peach in the ocean. As Spiker and Sponge put together that this is their peach the pace builds as they attempt to convince the Purser that this is an emergency and prepare to follow the peach.

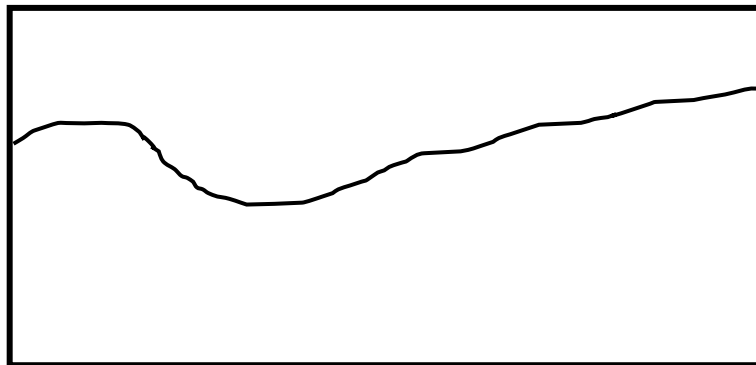
20. Unit 20: “Trouble at Sea” (pages 80–87)



a.

- b. Beginning calm and collected the tempo jumps as Centipede is sick and then increasingly gains speed as sharks begin to attack the peach. When the threat of seagulls is added to the situation there is another push in pace as the insects seek an immediate solution. The tempo slows for Earthworm to become convinced to help and then increases again as Earthworm sings and dances as active bait for the seagulls.

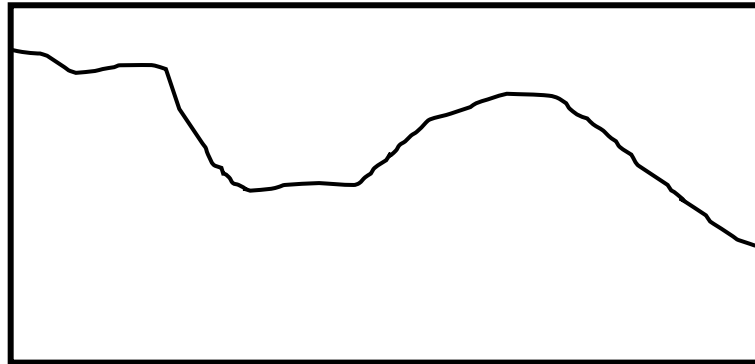
21. Unit 21: “In the Clouds” (pages 88–89)



a.

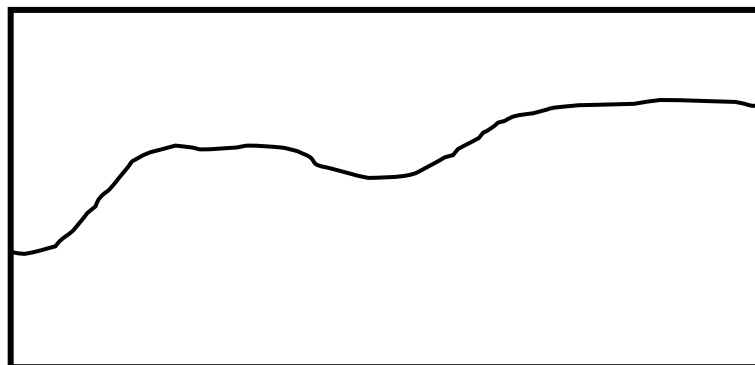
- b. The amazement of being in the clouds keeps the pace quick through this section. It slows as Earthworm struggles to find something that is wrong with the situation and then builds again as Centipede seeks to drive home his point that humans are inherently bad people.

22. Unit 22: “Man Overboard” (pages 89–91)



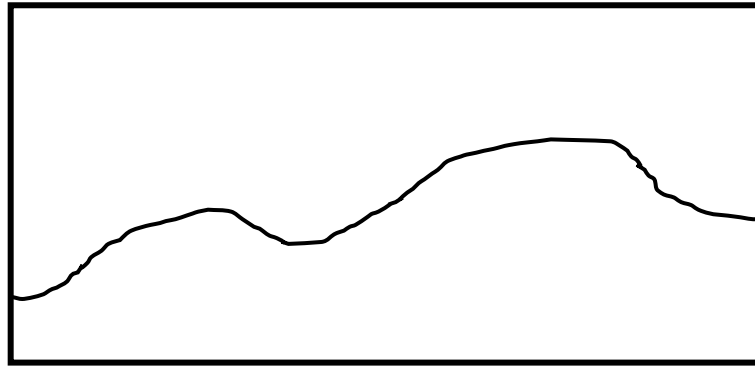
- a.
- b. Starting at a peak pace when Centipede falls off the peach and James rushes to his rescue. The pace drops as the insects wait for the signal to pull James to safety and then holds steady when they believe he has drowned. Once the signal does come, the tempo increases through the successful rescue then slows again as Centipede grapples with the fact that a human saved his life.

23. Unit 23: “Empire State Attack” (pages 92–94)



- a.
- b. Tempo increases as James and the insects make the discovery that they made it to New York. Then an increased tempo is held as Spiker and Sponge threaten the peach with attack helicopters and missiles until it lands on the Empire State Building.

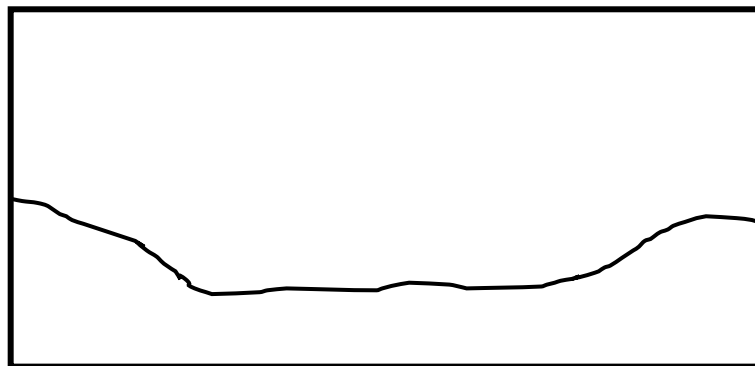
24. Unit 24: “Confrontation” (pages 94–96)



a.

- b. A gentle slow tempo accompanies Spiker and Sponge’s feigned sweetness, but very quickly they show their true colors in demanding James and the peach, resulting in a quicker pace of dialogue. This peaks as the peach falls and results in a steady pace decline once the peach kills them for good.

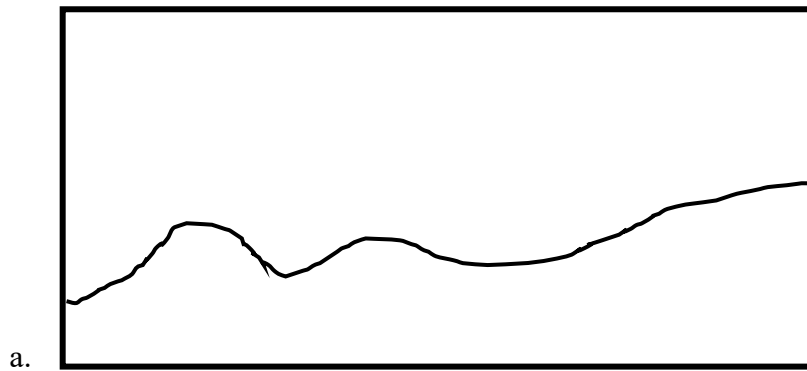
25. Unit 25: “Family” (pages 96–97)



a.

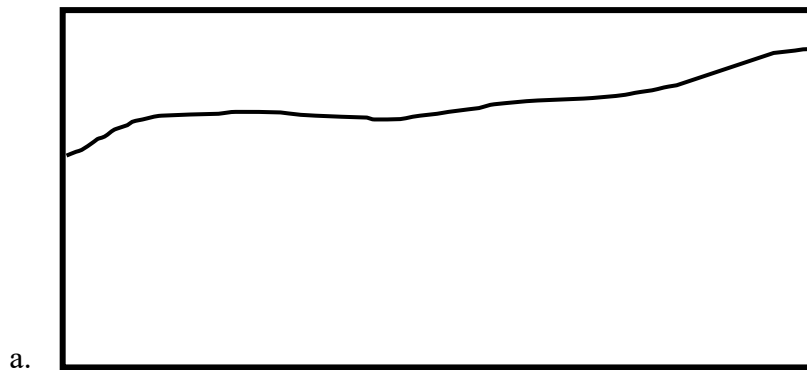
- b. Centipede’s attempted departure from the group brings a drop in the pace as James reassures him he is part of this new family and works to convince him to stay. Once he comes around the tempo increases as he is being welcomed back into the group.

26. Unit 26: “It Was All True” (pages 97–100)



- b. The tempo comes to a relaxed, yet energized pace as loose ends are tied up and a resolution is achieved in an upbeat number peppered with epilogue-like narration that creates a few drops in tempo.

27. Unit 27: “Closing the Book” (pages 100–101)



- b. The energy of the opening returns at a quicker pace clearing the stage of all the set up and driving the show to a punctuated finale.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The development of the Musical Theatre Intensive (MTI) class at Encore Stage & Studio was in response to the dichotomy of dwindling enrollment in musical theatre classes and increasing interest in participating in musical theatre productions. Over time, it had become clear that students were not carving out the time to develop their skills in the classroom. Instead, they would continue auditioning and expecting to get cast or have success at getting better role, without working to better their abilities before the next audition. While some students were successful, this cycle resulted in disappointment for most. Encore created MTI as a way to combat the “*Glee* effect” and to lure students back to the classroom with the promise of a role in a fully produced musical that was the culminating project of the class.

The goal of this study was to determine whether it is possible to employ the mounting of a full-scale musical production to motivate student growth in acting, singing, and dance due to the product-oriented environment. The hope was that the student actors’ participation in a fully staged production of *James and the Giant Peach* would incentivize students to master advanced musical theatre techniques in order to meet the demands of the material under the time constraints of the rehearsal process. In addition, the expectation was that resulting growth would provide students with appreciation for

the process, and therefore encourage them continue their work both in the classroom and in productions.

The group enrolled in MTI for the production of *James and the Giant Peach* had a significant range of musical theatre experience. For some students, this was their first exposure to a musical, whereas others had chosen this pre-professional class as a stepping stone in pursuit of a future career as a musical theatre performer. Despite this wide range of incoming abilities in acting, music, and dance, in the post-performance survey all of the students reported that the material was adequately challenging based on their incoming skill-level. While most of the students were moderately comfortable with the acting demands of the production, all of them struggled with the intricate harmonies in the musical score and with maintaining those harmonies while performing complex dance steps.

At the beginning of the process, actors shied away from working on the material that was beyond their current abilities and opted instead to review material they had already mastered. As the rehearsal process continued, and even into performances, students began to utilize rehearsal techniques learned from the instructors and started to rely on their fellow castmates to assist them with material that they were struggling to master. This was a significant turning point in the process. Students began to demonstrate growth in both their confidence and abilities, a phenomenon which one actor referred to as “slaying dragons.” The feeling of accomplishment in surmounting the complex vocal and dance demands of the show enhanced students’ performance and led to more accurate execution of the music and dance.

In addition, survey results showed that the students saw the influence their character decisions and acting choices had on shaping the final production. Actors were encouraged to bring their character ideas into rehearsal and incorporate them in the scene and staging work. As the process moved forward, a number of student driven ideas based on their interpretation of the characters and given circumstances answered questions the script left unanswered and impacted choices for staging important moments.

The most noteworthy of these was the decision that Ladahlord is James all grown up, recounting his own story to audiences across the globe with a travelling troupe of actors. The actor playing Ladahlord got the idea for this interpretation by answering the question posed by the director of why Ladahlord is in control of James' fate. The actor observed: "He [Ladahlord] dictates his own control to the audience and this idea of him as James helps establish him as a trustworthy narrator." He additionally observed that the "script provides a nice button or closure" to support this approach, as Ladahlord wraps up the show by asserting that the story was completely factual just as he had promised in the opening. This decision influenced many aspects of the production's staging, including Ladahlord's first encounter with James, Ladahlord's portrayal as a constant presence onstage observing his own story, what characters Ladahlord took on as part of James's story, and a revelation that Ladahlord is now in possession of the last items James had left from his parents.

Participants also stated in their surveys that the feedback and exercises used in the rehearsal process added to their "actor tool box" and offered them new ideas and approaches they could carry into future rehearsal and performance processes. One actor commented that the process "taught me how a character can be portrayed through every

aspect of yourself.” Another pointed specifically to a harmony exercise where actors held hands in a circle and focused on sending the sound to a specific point, noting that the exercise allowed them to “be connected and was a reminder of how important listening is as a part of singing.” Overall, the responses highlighted a lesson that one actor pinpointed as their biggest take away from the process that would impact how they approached future work: “one time making a mistake doesn’t mean you will never get it right.” This quote spoke to student realization of the power of resilience and rehearsal to overcome obstacles in mastery.

All of the participants in the study held a strong belief that their skills and abilities in musical theatre performance improved significantly over the course of the rehearsal and performance process for *James and the Giant Peach*. One student shared that they “absolutely feel my ability to make character decisions and motivations has improved and also impacted my ability to act.” Another student, who was participating in their first musical, commented how their improved technique as a singer also marked overcoming a personal fear:

I was kind of scared of singing before MTI. I took the class because I knew that if I was serious about theatre than I needed to get over that fear. The environment was extremely welcoming and although I am still not the most confident singer I am much more capable than I used to be. MTI has helped me get over that fear.

This student’s story points to the necessity for each actor’s growth to be considered on an individual basis.

Since each student was coming from a different background and level of comfort and experience in the musical theatre areas of acting, singing, and dance, growth was tracked on an individual level. Across the board, the participants showed significant growth in the areas of acting and singing. In the area of dance, some participants showed

slight increases in ability but many remained stagnant. This outcome was in line with the demands of the specific musical as well as production decisions made during the rehearsal process. *James and the Giant Peach* featured a very challenging score, requiring the majority of students to stretch their abilities in that area. Although the scene work and characterizations were not as complex as the musical needs of the show, the production team and actors dedicated significant time to character development and beat work in order to tell the story effectively and truthfully for an audience. The dance requirements for *James* as a production are minimal, and this rendition of the musical did not feature dance based on the incoming abilities of the actors and time constraints. Of the big production numbers, only one had significant choreography and, due to time constraints following the departure of an actor from the class, other opportunities for dance were not incorporated into the production. Due to the limited amount of dancing, it followed that there would be less measurable growth in the dance abilities of the participants.

The most unexpected observation of student growth patterns was the timing of their substantial steps forward. The majority of mastery over the material, signifying growth in ability, occurred during the performance process. Each performance demonstrated significant improvements in the accuracy of vocal lines, dance steps, and connections with fellow cast members. The timing of this growth with the performances suggested that audience reaction is a significant driver of actor motivation to succeed. However, in order to succeed actors needed to have mastery over the material, which in turn could only be achieved by developing the skills necessary to meet the demands of the show.

Many aspects of the final production were successful. Each of the students displayed overall growth in musical theatre performance, demonstrating a place in theatre pedagogy for the production-based classroom. Outside of the classroom, most actors get past opening night and allow the work to become repetitive and stagnant. The ensemble of *James and the Giant Peach* instead continued their dedication to bettering themselves each performance through the closing of the production. Furthermore, the students rallied around the departure of an actor at a critical time in the show's rehearsal process to ensure the success of the incoming actor and the production overall. The departure, while unfortunate, inspired a connected and supportive ensemble dedicated to assisting each other to achieve their personal best.

On the other hand, the significant break before technical rehearsals hampered actors in continuing their skill-building and halted production momentum towards performances. Also, the balance between time needed to adequately rehearse music and dance numbers with the actors versus crafting characters and scenes meant more responsibility was placed on actors to do independent work for the acting to meet the same standards as the musical numbers. However, this balance was in response to the needs of this ensemble. They required more time to master the musical numbers than recall work done on scenes in the rehearsal process.

Although one actor described *James and the Giant Peach* as a musical based around "a lot of unnecessary silliness," the rehearsal and performance process presented many takeaways for further work in musical theatre and performance-based classroom pedagogy. Presuming the goal is promoting student growth in musical theatre skills, the process must remain flexible enough to focus on student needs to learn techniques and

rehearse what is most challenging for them. Additionally, the focus on growth can easily instill a mindset where actors become so focused on getting the material correct that they neglect performance qualities, such as stage presence and audience connection, that are also necessary for successful engaging productions. At some point in the process there should be a guided transition toward integrating the technique with performance practice. This would mean defining a time where actors should change their focus away from rehearsing to get the material correct to rehearsing like they are going to perform.

Ultimately, this process showed that a production-based classroom can motivate student growth in musical theatre-related skillsets. In fact, it was performances of the production itself and the audience reactions therein that truly inspired the actors to meet the demands of the challenging material. While their final performance quality would not have been feasible without the months of preparation and teaching provided by the production team, the performances were a major motivator for much of the students' eventual growth. Furthermore, student surveys do indicate that several members of the cast had gained a new appreciation for the process and how to apply techniques learned in MTI to future musical theatre endeavors. Therefore, a production-based classroom environment appears to be one method to the "*Glee* effect," inspiring students to learn and grow while also fulfilling their desire for performance opportunities.

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APPENDIX
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DOCUMENTS

IRB Approval Letter
Kelsey A. Meiklejohn, M.A. Student in Theatre Education



Institutional Review Board

DATE: December 19, 2017

TO: Kelsey Meiklejohn

FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1147445-2] Teaching Musical Theatre Skills in Production Based Classes Through Participation in James and the Giant Peach

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: December 19, 2017

EXPIRATION DATE: December 19, 2018

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB has APPROVED your submission. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of December 19, 2018.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Kelsey -

Thank you for your patience with UNC IRB. Dr. Correa-Torres, the first reviewer of your application, provided approval based on the thorough amendments and modifications submitted. Subsequently, I reviewed your original and revised materials and am recommending approval as well. Please be sure to use all of the revised/amended protocols and materials (e.g. consent and assent forms) in your participant recruitment and data collection.

Best wishes with your master's thesis research and the production!

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.

Narrative

Kelsey A. Meiklejohn, M.A. Student in Theatre Education

Title: Teaching Musical Theatre Skills in the Performance-Based Classroom: *James and the Giant Peach*: Master's Thesis

A. Purpose

1. The purpose of my thesis is to produce *James and the Giant Peach* because of the variety and advanced level of musical theatre skills required from the performers as well as the ensemble driven nature of the material. Through this musical, I hope to facilitate development of advanced-level acting, singing, and dance skills during the rehearsal process as the performers engage in physical and vocal character development; analyze the mindset of their character(s); undertake intricate music featuring four and five part harmonies; learn complex dance numbers; contribute to an ensemble and build an inclusive, engaged atmosphere.

I hypothesize that the direction of *James and the Giant Peach* at Encore Stage & Studio will challenge students to build upon existing theatre skills to meet the advanced demands of the production material. I have chosen this thesis in order to study two research questions: first, is it possible to teach musical theatre skills in a production based classroom where rehearsal often takes priority? and second; how are those skills best taught in conjunction with the production and rehearsal work?

My ultimate goal in producing this musical is to build upon the knowledge and skill the students bring into the rehearsal process and challenge them with more complex material that will enable them to expand and enhance their abilities as musical theatre performers. Students begin the class with a variety of skill levels and experience with musical theatre. It is my hope that students will experience personal growth in all three aspects of musical theatre performance: acting, singing, and dance. The musical will be performed eight times for the local public by a cast of approximately eleven middle and high school students. The students will rehearse and perform over the span of approximately fifteen weeks at Encore Stage & Studio's campus, where class is held, and at a local county owned theatre facility, where the musical will be performed.

The rationale behind my hypothesis lies in the advanced and intricate material of *James and the Giant Peach*, which presents an opportunity for students to expand and develop their existing musical theatre abilities and skills in order to meet the demands of the production. Many middle and high school productions focus on choosing material appropriate to students' current abilities, and while this leads to a sense of comfortability, students often fail to grow as performers unless they take additional classes or private lessons. Because their skills remain stagnant this often leads to dissatisfaction in casting and students discontinuing participation in musicals. These problems lead me to believe that the production of this musical, and prioritizing acquisition and development of skills can have a particularly powerful impact on those who engage and participate in it.

Potential benefits to my students who are involved in this performance include increased creativity, communication, and engagement. They will also be asked to participate in rehearsals for the musical which will challenge them to think critically about ways to enhance their work as musical theatre performers through conducting character analysis at a deeper level, working with complex musical scores and harmonies, and engaging in intricate choreography for dances. Ultimately, as I strive to reach the goal of my thesis, as stated above, the students will benefit from strengthened engagement, and therefore performance skills, inside of a safe, positive, and

artistic learning community. I also hope to guide them into an increased ability to analyze their own abilities as performers to focus and motivate continual personal growth.

More research is needed in this area because while *James and the Giant Peach* is a popular choice for production in secondary schools, the rights holder Music Theatre International lists over eighty productions in the 2017-2018 school year alone, research failed to uncover documentation of educators producing this show with a focus on simultaneously enhancing the musical theatre skills and abilities of the participating students. This research is needed to provide educators with a clear rationale and model for producing a musical to both enhance student growth as performers and provide them with performance opportunities. There are a plethora of articles and research touting the benefits of performance, published from The American Alliance for Theatre and Education, Science Daily, The Washington Post, and many more. However, there is little formal documentation of how rehearsal and performance participation can develop skills typically learned exclusively in a theatre classroom setting. This dramaturgical protocol will detail how a production of the stage version of *James and the Giant Peach* performed by students can serve to simultaneously teach musical theatre skills and present a fully-staged musical. This research will then provide educators with a model for running a rehearsal and production process which blends skill-building and student growth with performance practices.

2. I am applying in the category of Expedited because middle and high school students are considered a vulnerable population. Risks inherent in this study are no greater than those normally encountered during regular rehearsal participation. While I will collect exit tickets, a short survey with open-ended questions geared toward measuring student understanding, after rehearsals and short written survey responses after the final performance, most of my data will be collected as observations based on rehearsal and performance. The students involved will participate in regularly scheduled rehearsals, during which I will follow daily rehearsal plans that encourage development of advanced musical theatre skills in acting, singing, and dance, as well as student commitment. My plan is to work with this set of students for approximately fifteen weeks, which includes the full rehearsal process and eight performances.

B. Methods

1. **Participants:** Participants will consist of approximately twelve middle and high school students who will play the roles in *James and the Giant Peach*. In order to be considered for casting in the musical, students must be currently enrolled in 8th-12th grade and registered for the Musical Theatre Intensive class at Encore Stage & Studio. Stage crew will consist of high school students, but the active participants will be the twelve cast members.

The class and its subsequent production of *James and the Giant Peach* are open to any student and are entirely optional. Students will be enrolled participants in Encore's Musical Theatre Intensive class, which culminates in a full-length musical production. The methods used to recruit students for this class and production will be season brochures and email newsletters. Participation in the class is not tied to participation in conducted research. Once students have registered for the production class they will receive information regarding potential participation in the study. In addition to clarifying that students enrolled in the class are not required to participate in the study, these materials will contain contact information including my name, as director, as well as times, dates, locations, and costs of the program. The information will also explain that students and parents/guardians can come by my office for more information. In

addition, my contact information will be posted on Encore's website. Students and parents/guardians can contact me via email or in person with questions.

All students will have personally chosen to audition for roles in the production of *James and the Giant Peach*. No student will be compelled to participate and may choose to remove themselves from the production at any time. All students will be between the ages of 13 and 18 and have exhibited a desire to be involved through their choice to participate.

Consent/Assent forms will be distributed by the director to interested students in a packet during the informational meeting and again, for any who could not attend the meeting, at auditions. The forms will also be posted to the productions online portal page which both parents/guardians and students have access to. They will be collected before the first rehearsal. These forms must be submitted prior to any data collection with the signatures of both parents/guardians and students. The forms contain my email address and phone number, as well as my advisor's contact information, with instructions to return the forms before the first rehearsal to Encore's Production Manager, via email or mail. They will be held there until all casting decisions have been made. This will be the most common method of collection, and the use of a neutral third party collector will make clear to potential participants that casting decisions were made prior to my knowledge of their participation decisions.

2. Data Collection Procedures:

- a. Performers will meet as follows: two days a week, for nine weeks, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.; three days a week, for four weeks, from 7:00-9:00pm; five days a week, for one week, from 6:00-9:30pm to prepare the show for a paying audience. Students will perform for the public a total of eight times in the black box theatre at Gunston Performing Arts Center. Many of the students will not attend every rehearsal. Due to the ensemble nature of the show all actors and the stage manager will be present at all rehearsals, approximately four to six hour per a week for thirteen weeks and seventeen-eighteen hours a week for one week, for a total of eighty-four and a half hours of rehearsal time.
- b. **Standard rehearsal practices will be conducted thus:** performers will practice their lines, stage movement, and work on character development. In addition, they will learn musical numbers including voice parts and dance combinations for the musical. During the last week of the rehearsal process, the performers will combine their activities with the technical elements, designed by a separate crew, to create a unified production.
- c. **Type of Data and How it is Collected:** I will collect qualitative data throughout this process using my personal laptop. The types of data that will be collected include: (1) Reflexivity journal which will be used to document reflections on potential findings, observations of students as they rehearse and perform, possible implications of the research process, and documentation of developing codes and emerging themes. The reflexivity journal will be recorded in secured, private electronic documents as typed on the laptop; (2) transcripts from students' discussions and feedback during rehearsals (I will prompt my students to discuss their evolving ideas about their character's development and skill development by asking open-ended questions, and while they take turns responding, I will listen and record by typing the conversation as notes in a word document file in real time on my laptop so I may later return to the discussion as documented and conduct further analysis. No recording device will be used.); (3) exit tickets which offer open-ended prompts for students to respond to and will be collected at the conclusion of each rehearsal, which will be stored in a locked-file cabinet at my desk until recorded electronically alongside the reflexivity journal in secured private documents on my laptop after which they will be shredded; and (4) post-performance student written reflections on provided prompts and

submitted to me electronically. Data will be used to write my conclusion, describing the process and the overall outcomes. Using the information collected, I will attempt to determine if my hypothesis (that musical theatre skills can be taught and enhanced in the production-based classroom through *James and the Giant Peach*) proved to be true, and to what extent this goal was successfully met.

- d. **The specific types of observation/What I will be observing:** I will gather data that is representative of all eleven cast members. Each cast member will be assigned a number. During rehearsals, I will observe and take notes on all student participants who actively participate in character analysis as well as music and dance work. When recording observations, I will focus on observing the behavior and discussion comments of the students, regarding both skill development and student engagement in the rehearsal and production process. At the end of each rehearsal week, student behaviors will be rated according to the skill development and student engagement rubric below.
 - e. The following identifiers will be observed and noted in my journal in order to measure the outcomes and degree to which goals were successfully met:
 - Student willingness to engage in character analysis and skill development activities during rehearsal
 - Student ability to take initiative to develop and expand musical theatre skills during rehearsal in ways the director has not explicitly instructed
 - Quality of student contributions during discussions and depth of critical thinking
 - Student ability to articulate the objectives of the characters
 - Student ability to incorporate director, music director, and choreographer feedback into rehearsal work
 - Student ability to authentically portray a variety of perspectives on stage
 - Student engagement in the overall production process
 - Quality of student written post-rehearsal and post-performance reflections
 - f. The majority of my data will come from written observations recorded in a journal. Parents and students will sign consent and assent forms in order to participate in my research, which will also allow me to quote statements the performers make during rehearsals, to quote excerpts from the post-rehearsal and post-performance student written reflections, and to include their student's image in pictures I may include in my thesis. If I include images of costume, set, or action, I will have their permission to do so. Students will be referred to by pseudonyms in my thesis, rather than by their given names. I will also provide a copy of the form to each parent and student for their own personal records.
 - g. Encore Stage & Studio is a non-profit theatre for young people offering programs for students in grades pre-K to college. The policy for approval of theatre productions is left to the discretion of the Artistic Director and approved by the Board of Directors. I have acquired the permission of Encore's Artistic Director, Executive Director, and Board of Directors to produce *James and the Giant Peach*. They have been made aware of my quest for this graduate degree. Attached to my IRB package is a copy of their approval letter.
3. **Data Analysis Procedures:** The data collected will come primarily from my written observations, kept in the reflexivity journal, regarding the rehearsal and performance process. I will also transcribe student statements made during discussions facilitated at some rehearsals where students are asked to analyze various elements of their characters and the impact of those elements on their performances. I will also include excerpts from student written post-performance reflections. These will be used mainly to write the conclusion of my thesis, showing the outcome of the rehearsal process. My observation notes will be used for a required section of this thesis and will otherwise be stored in my *James and the Giant Peach* notes that will be kept

on a private Google Drive folder. As there will be no recording device used during rehearsals, written transcripts of conversations as recorded by me during rehearsal will be utilized and stored in the same manner as the observation notes. Student-written reflections will be stored in the same manner.

Explanation of Methods Employed to Analyze Data and How it will be Analyzed: Due to the qualitative nature of my research, I have chosen a thematic analysis methodology. I will take a deductive approach, driven by the following research questions: first; is it possible to teach musical theatre skills in a production based classroom where rehearsal often takes priority, and second; how are those skills best taught in conjunction with the production and rehearsal work. My theory is that direction of *James and the Giant Peach* at Ankeny Encore Stage & Studio will have a powerful impact on the students involved in its performance, particularly an increased acquisition and development of musical theatre skills through the development and analysis of their individual character(s).

I will examine patterns across the data sets that are important to the description of the students' experience over the course of the production, with specific focus on increased musical theatre performance skill level in all students, and also of increased ability to analyze the mindset of and, therefore, to physically and vocally portray their assigned character(s). This approach will allow me to emphasize the students' perceptions and overall experiences during their time participating in *James and the Giant Peach*, without limiting them to fixed-response survey questions found in quantitative research.

Explanation of specific methods used to identify the themes of the data collected:

Phase	Process	Result
Phase 1 Read over the Data	I will carefully reexamine all the data for significant patterns that occur, using the preliminary "start list" of potential codes as a starting focus point. I will be able to begin coding after I recognize important moments in the data.	After finishing the transcription of rehearsals, reading through the reflexivity journal, exit tickets, and post-performance student-written statements, I will be able to mark data that directly addresses the research question, in order to begin coding.
Phase 2 Generate Initial Codes	Organize all the data. First, index the data texts into journal notes, rehearsal transcripts, exit tickets and post-performance student-written statements. Second, reduce all data into segments that share reoccurring patterns. Use this organization to generate the initial coding, by documenting where/how patterns occur.	After organizing all data, I will create initial coding to determine how data answers the research question. I will ask the following questions as I prepare to encode the data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are students trying to accomplish? • How exactly do they do this? What specific means or strategies are used? • How do students talk about and understand what is going on? • What assumptions are they making? • What observations have I made? • Why did I include them?
Phase 3 Generate Initial List of Themes	I will begin by asking: How do the codes fit together to create overarching themes in the data? I will create theme phrases/sentences derived from the students' experience and my observations that identify what the data means, and how the coded data can be read for analytic reflection.	I will generate a list of theme phrases/sentences. I will explain how all codes were interpreted, and explain their relationship, in order to form the generated themes. I will propose a theory based on the generated list of themes.
Phase 4	I will reexamine the data for evidence that	I will create a thematic map that explains what each

Review the Themes	<p>supports/refutes my theory, and look for any overlap, connections or deviations. I will then make any revisions to the themes as needed.</p> <p>Questions to consider: How does each individual theme connect to the data set? Does this accurately reflect the meaning of the data, and therefore accurately represent the students' experience?</p>	<p>individual theme is, how they all relate to one another, and how they work together to tell the story of the data.</p> <p>I will provide detailed notes about my process to understand the generated themes and how they fit together.</p> <p>I will seek to answer my research question using data to support.</p>
Phase 5 Solidify Definitions Themes	<p>I will solidify all definitions of themes in order to write the final written report, and answer what exactly is interesting about the themes, and what data is being captured. The interpretation of these codes may include comparing theme frequencies, identifying theme co-occurrence, and graphically displaying relationships between different themes</p>	<p>I will explain my analysis and why the themes I tracked are significant and how they help to understand the data collected.</p> <p>List defined themes.</p>
Phase 6 Reach Conclusions and Present Findings	<p>I will explain through the final written report published in the thesis how the thematic analysis conducted makes a meaningful contribution to understanding the data and answering the research question.</p>	<p>Description of the entire process of data collection and thematic analysis. Conclusion that explains the significance and value of the study.</p> <p>I will answer the research question, determine the extent to which answers support/refute initial theory, draw conclusions from the most important themes.</p>

How I will determine success of hypothesis: Success of the hypothesis will be determined if at least 90% of the students are observed to have exhibited personal growth in acting, music, and dance skills through character development. In addition, these students will contribute a statement at some point in time, whether in rehearsal discussion, exit tickets, or post-performance written reflection, that demonstrates an increased engagement from previous theatrical experiences for students with past experience or that demonstrates a positive comment about their engagement based on their sole theatrical experience in this production. **Below, I will explain what indicators I will be looking to observe, in order to determine the level of success, and I will also explain how the data collected will be coded.**

Explanation of Indicators of Student Growth in Acting, Music, and Dance Skills:

- Student ability to take initiative to develop and expand musical theatre skills during rehearsal in ways the director has not explicitly instructed
- Student willingness to engage in character analysis and skill development activities during rehearsal
- Student willingness and ability to incorporate director, music director, and choreographer feedback into rehearsal work
- Quality of student contributions during discussions and depth of critical thinking
- Quality of student written post-performance reflections: Do student statements demonstrate any evidence of metacognition, with specific acknowledgement of increased ability to analyze, and therefore perform, their character's perspective?
- Student ability to authentically portray a variety of perspectives on stage

Explanation of Indicators of Student Growth in Skill-Building Engagement:

- Successful completion of director-led rehearsal exercises that require collaboration trust between ensemble members
- Student willingness and ability to bring forth unique, creative ideas during the rehearsal process
- Quality of student written post-performance reflections: Do student statements demonstrate any evidence of metacognition, with specific acknowledgement of increased engagement as a result of participation in the study?
- Comparison of student interpersonal relationships at the beginning and end of process

Explanation of How Data will be Coded:

The following rubric will be used to code the qualitative data that is collected throughout the research process. This rubric will be used to assess all cast members, as the emphasis of my research is to look at the skill development of all actors in *James and the Giant Peach*. My primary focus during data collection will be limited to observations recorded in my reflexivity journal, transcripts from rehearsal conversations, post-rehearsal exit tickets and post-performance student written reflections.

I will collect “baseline” data points at the first rehearsal of the production process. At the end of the first rehearsal, I will score the representative set of students using the following rubric, based on their current acting, music, and dance skill levels as portrayed through their character and based on their engagement in the rehearsal. Throughout the rehearsal process, I will track student growth, scoring each student according to the rubric once per week. To arrive at this assigned score, I will use the qualitative data gathered in observations, discussion transcripts, and student written statements.

Definition of “Success”- Target Goals for Student Growth:

- Students who earned a 1 at first rehearsal will earn at least a 2 or 3 by final performance.
- Students who earned a 2 at first rehearsal will earn at least a 3 or 4 by final performance.
- Students who earned a 3 at first rehearsal will earn at least a 3 or 4 by final performance.
- Students who earned a 4 at first rehearsal will earn a 3 or 4 on a more complex task by final performance.

Criteria for Effectiveness	Full Attainment of Target	Partial Attainment of Target	Insufficient Attainment of Target
	More than 90% of students meet agreed upon learning targets.	Between 75% and 90% of students meet agreed upon learning targets.	Less than 75% of students meet agreed upon learning targets.

Criteria	Fully Developed	Adequately Developed	Partially Developed	Undeveloped
Growth in Acting, Music, and Dance Skills	Strong choices are made to create character	Choices are made to create character, both physically and vocally, but may not	Character is not constant and/or choices were not strong, either	Character choices were not made.

	<p>fully, both physically and vocally.</p> <p>Character is authentic and has clear motivation.</p> <p>Emotion is believable.</p> <p>Pitches and harmonies are matched to the piano and score.</p> <p>Combinations are executed full-out with no mistakes and attention to detail.</p>	<p>be consistent or appropriate to the character.</p> <p>Character is authentic, but motivation may be unclear or occasionally become stereotypical.</p> <p>Emotion is somewhat believable.</p> <p>Pitches and harmonies are somewhat matched to the piano and score.</p> <p>Combinations are executed with minimal mistakes and attention to detail.</p>	<p>physically, vocally, or both.</p> <p>Character is rarely authentic and is often stereotypical.</p> <p>Emotion is rarely believable.</p> <p>Pitches and harmonies are rarely matched to the piano and score.</p> <p>Combinations are executed with notable mistakes and a lack of attention to detail.</p>	<p>Pitches and harmonies are not matched to the piano and score.</p> <p>Combinations are executed with significant mistakes and no attention to detail.</p>
Student Engagement	<p>Utilizes all rehearsal time for tasks related to performance.</p> <p>Participates fully in the feedback process (both giving and receiving).</p> <p>Works with all members of the group to develop the performance (listens, is respectful, does fair share, etc.)</p>	<p>Utilizes most rehearsal time for tasks related to performance.</p> <p>Participates in the feedback process, but has unequal focus on either giving or receiving.</p> <p>Works with all members of the group to develop the performance (listens, is respectful, does fair share, etc.)</p>	<p>Utilizes some rehearsal time for tasks related to performance.</p> <p>Participates minimally in the feedback process, giving little feedback and making few changes based on feedback received.</p> <p>Works with a select few members of the group to develop the performance (may do only one or two of the skills listed in proficient column)</p>	<p>Utilizes little to no rehearsal time for tasks related to performance.</p> <p>Does not participate in the feedback process.</p> <p>Works with no members of the group to develop the performance.</p>

4. **Data Handling Procedures:** Data will be handled in a confidential manner throughout the collection and analysis processes. No personal or identifiable information concerning recorded observations or written survey responses will be used in the thesis. Observations made during rehearsals and performances that are included in the thesis will also guard the privacy of each student, as no student will be referred to by name, but rather by pseudonyms invented by me or their character name. All data collected will be stored digitally on Google Drive as is standard for every production produced and directed. This is only accessible to the researcher unless others are identified and invited to share the files electronically. Consent and assent forms will be

stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Research Advisor's office for three years, after which they will be destroyed as per page 17 of the Procedures Manual.

C. Risks, Discomforts and Benefits

The risks inherent in this study are no greater than those encountered during regular rehearsal participation. With a cast of middle and high school students, there is always a risk that social friction can grow between students due to the large amount of time spent together. The benefit to being in the cast, however, is that the students also have the opportunity to create and strengthen friendships. Another risk is that the performers may experience some emotional and/or social discomfort during rehearsals if another member of the cast challenges or contradicts their views, opinions, or performance.

Medical procedure safeguards will be in place against improbable emergencies, such as unexpected illness or accidents during rehearsals and/or performances. The established safety procedures of Encore Stage & Studio will be followed in the event of any emergency that may occur during data collection, including, but not limited to, tornado drills, fire drills, and intruder alerts.

Potential benefits to my students who are involved in this performance include increased creativity, communication, engagement, and musical theatre performance skills. Students cast in *James and the Giant Peach* will be asked to participate in rehearsals that will challenge them to think critically; conduct character analysis at a deeper level; understand character motivation, obstacles, and focus; participate in vocal music and dance training; and test their conclusions through discussion and collaboration with peers and teacher. The students will also benefit from strengthened engagement, which will be developed inside of a safe, inclusive environment.

D. Costs and Compensations

There will be no compensation to the participants. The production is part of the Musical Theatre Intensive class at Encore Stage & Studio and has a tuition cost of \$1,250. This fee includes a full year of classes that culminate in the production of *James and the Giant Peach* as well as a ticket to a professional musical production at Signature Theatre. Full and partial scholarships are available to students who cannot afford the tuition cost. Additional costs include the students' time, and transportation to the rehearsal and performance facilities.

E. Grant Information

Encore Stage & Studio received a \$23,292 grant from the Arlington County Commission for the Arts for its 2017-2018 production season restricted to puppetry design and workshops. Approximately \$2,000 of this grant is budgeted for this production of *James and the Giant Peach* which will be used for my research. In accordance with the restrictions of the grant, these funds will cover the cost of labor and materials of the puppets designed for the production as well as an "Acting with Puppets" Workshop for the actors and artistic staff led by a guest artist. Although puppetry will be a featured element in this production of *James and the Giant Peach*, neither the puppets' design or the workshop will have a direct impact on the research being done or the data being collected. Rather, the grant will help fulfill specialized design elements necessary for the final production.

In addition, the grant includes a space and services portion which allows Encore Stage & Studio the use of Gunston Performing Arts Center Theatre Two facilities as the physical location for the production. This portion of the grant provides a professional black-box theatre in which performances for *James and the Giant Peach* will take place. Outside of providing a place for the production, the space and services grant will not have a direct impact on the research being done or the data being collected.

Encore Consent Letter
Kelsey A. Meiklejohn, M.A. Student in Theatre Education



ENCORE STAGE & STUDIO

4000 Lorcom Lane
Arlington, VA 22207

www.encorestage.org

November 1, 2017

Kelsey Meiklejohn has the permission of the Encore Stage & Studio Board of Directors to use her work on our production of *James and the Giant Peach* for her master's thesis research.

Sincerely,

Sara Duke
Executive Director

Recruitment Letter

Kelsey A. Meiklejohn, M.A. Student in Theatre Education



Dear Participants and Parents,

My name is Kelsey Meiklejohn and I am the Secondary Education Programs Manager, as well as the Director of Encore's Musical Theatre Intensive. We are so glad your student has decided to join us for this year's class which will culminate in a fully-staged production of *James and the Giant Peach*.

I wanted to reach out to you regarding a unique circumstance for the class this year. As many of you know, I am currently pursuing my Master's in Theatre Education through the University of Northern Colorado. As part of my program, I will be conducting research regarding the ability to teach musical theatre skills in the production based classroom. Encore has graciously agreed to allow me to integrate my research on this topic into the rehearsal and performance process for *James and the Giant Peach*.

Although I am looking for students and parents who are interested and willing to participate in my research and who are part of the class, enrollment and casting will function separate from the research selection process. In other words, all are welcome to enroll in Musical Theatre Intensive and its production of *James and the Giant Peach*.

Once the rehearsal process begins, I will be reaching out to see if students, with their parents' consent, would be willing to serve as participants in my study. Participation will in no way affect participation in or casting for the musical.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or Encore's Executive Director with any questions. Our contact information is listed below. I look forward to working with your student for what is sure to be a "high-flying" production!

Warmly,

Kelsey Meiklejohn
Musical Theatre Intensive Director
Secondary Education Programs Manager
kelsey.meiklejohn@encorestage.org
703-548-1154

Sara Duke
Executive Director
sara.duke@encorestage.org
703-548-1154

Student Assent Form
Kelsey A. Meiklejohn, M.A. Student in Theatre Education



ASSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

Teaching Musical Theatre Skills in the Production-Based Classroom: *James and the Giant Peach*

Researcher Name: Kelsey Meiklejohn	Research Advisor: Dr. Mary Schuttler
Researcher Phone: (757) 645-8553	Research Advisor Phone: (970) 351-1926
Researcher Email: kameiklejohn@gmail.com	Research Advisor Email: mary.schuttler@unco.edu
Master's Candidate at the University of Northern Colorado	Instructor at the University of Northern Colorado

Dear Actors,

I am currently in pursuit of my master's degree in Theatre Education through the University of Northern Colorado. My thesis project centers on *James and the Giant Peach*, and it focuses on how I can teach musical theatre skills in a class that focuses on mounting a production of a full-length musical, which will hopefully lead to improved acting, dance, and singing skills for all involved. I am asking for your permission to include you as part of this project. Please read the information below, and if you agree with the terms of this study, please sign the back of one copy of this form and return it to me before the first rehearsal. Keep the other copy of this consent form for your personal records. If you have any questions about the project or your involvement, please contact me via the email or phone number listed above. Thank you for your consideration and support in attaining my master's degree.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to determine the extent to which musical theatre skills can be taught in classes which focus on the production of a musical.

Participation: You will be asked to attend regularly scheduled rehearsals, on Monday & Wednesday from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. for approximately six weeks. Rehearsal will also be held on Friday from 7:00 to 10:00pm for three weeks before performances, as well as every day from 6-9:30pm during Tech Week (the week leading up to performances). You will be asked to participate in rehearsal activities that are designed to build ensemble and help expand your knowledge of acting, dance, and vocal techniques utilized by actors when approaching musical theatre material for performance. Data will be collected in four forms: the researcher's written observations in rehearsal and performance; transcripts of conversations had in rehearsal regarding skills taught and applied to the material; exit tickets turned in after rehearsal; and written responses from you after the rehearsal process and subsequent performances are complete. The questions to which you will be responding will follow an open-answer format, and will ask you to recount your



experiences throughout the rehearsal process and its perceived effect on your performance, skills, and abilities as an actor.

Photographs may be taken throughout the rehearsal and performance process to document the show. Agreement to participation in this study permits these photos to be utilized in the published thesis as visual representations of the final performance product.

Confidentiality: All data collected will remain confidential. Anonymity and confidentiality are not the same. When data collection is anonymous, researchers and others do not know from whom the information came. Because the researcher will collect data directly from participants, the data will not be anonymous. When data collection is kept confidential, the researcher knows the source but strives to protect the privacy of the information. In any writing and/or discussion regarding the data collected, you will be referred to only by pseudonyms assigned by the researcher or by your character name. All raw data will be kept in a secured file by the researcher. Personally identifiable information will not be shared. Assent forms will be retained by my Research Advisor and stored in a locked filing cabinet in their office for three years, after which they will be destroyed.

Risks: Risks inherent in this study are no greater than those normally encountered during regular rehearsals. Nonparticipation or withdrawal from the study will not affect your ability to participate in the rehearsal process or performance.

Participation in my research will not give you an advantage during the audition process nor will it exclude you from being able to participate. Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference.

I agree to participate in the research Kelsey Meiklejohn is conducting for her Master's Thesis.

Student

Researcher

Parent Consent Form
Kelsey A. Meiklejohn, M.A. Student in Theatre Education



CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

Teaching Musical Theatre Skills in the Production-Based Classroom: *James and the Giant Peach*

Researcher Name: Kelsey Meiklejohn	Research Advisor: Dr. Mary Schuttler
Researcher Phone: (757) 645-8553	Research Advisor Phone: (970) 351-1926
Researcher Email: kameiklejohn@gmail.com	Research Advisor Email: mary.schuttler@unco.edu
Master's Candidate at the University of Northern Colorado	Instructor at the University of Northern Colorado

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am currently in pursuit of my master's degree in Theatre Education through the University of Northern Colorado. My thesis project centers on *James and the Giant Peach*, and it focuses on how I can teach musical theatre skills in a class that focuses on mounting a production of a full-length musical, which will hopefully lead to improved acting, dance, and singing skills for all involved. I am asking for your permission to include your child as part of this project. Please read the information below, and if you agree with the terms of this study, please sign the back of one copy of this form and return it to me before the first rehearsal. Keep the other copy of this consent form for your personal records. If you have any questions about the project or your student's involvement, please contact me via the email or phone number listed above. Thank you for your consideration and support in attaining my master's degree.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to determine the extent to which musical theatre skills can be taught in classes which focus on the production of a musical.

Participation: Students will be asked to attend regularly scheduled rehearsals, on Monday & Wednesday from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. for approximately six weeks. Rehearsal will also be held on Friday from 7:00 to 10:00pm for three weeks before performances, as well as every day from 6-9:30pm during Tech Week (the week leading up to performances). Your child will be asked to participate in rehearsal activities that are designed to build ensemble and help expand their knowledge of acting, dance, and vocal techniques utilized by actors when approaching musical theatre material for performance. Data will be collected in four forms: the researcher's written observations in rehearsal and performance; transcripts of conversations had in rehearsal regarding skills taught and applied to the material; exit tickets turned in after rehearsal; and written responses from students after the rehearsal process and subsequent performances are complete. The questions to which your child will be responding will follow an open-answer format, and will ask them to recount their



experiences throughout the rehearsal process and its perceived effect on their performance, skills, and abilities as an actor.

Photographs may be taken throughout the rehearsal and performance process to document the show. Agreement to participation in this study permits these photos to be utilized in the published thesis as visual representations of the final performance product.

Confidentiality: All data collected will remain confidential. Anonymity and confidentiality are not the same. When data collection is anonymous, researchers and others do not know from whom the information came. Because the researcher will collect data directly from participants, the data will not be anonymous. When data collection is kept confidential, the researcher knows the source but strives to protect the privacy of the information. In any writing and/or discussion regarding the data collected, students will be referred to only by pseudonyms assigned by the researcher or by their character name. All raw data will be kept in a secured file by the researcher. Personally identifiable information will not be shared. Consent forms will be retained by my Research Advisor and stored in a locked filing cabinet in their office for three years, after which they will be destroyed.

Risks: Risks inherent in this study are no greater than those normally encountered during regular rehearsals. Nonparticipation or withdrawal from the study will not affect the student's ability to participate in the rehearsal process or performance. Participation in my research will not give students an advantage during the audition process nor will it exclude them from being able to participate.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to allow your child to participate in this study and if (s)he begins participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910

I agree to participate in the research Kelsey Meiklejohn is conducting for her Master's Thesis.

Signature of Participant _____

Signature of Participant's Parent/Guardian _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Exit Ticket**Kelsey A. Meiklejohn, M.A. Student in Theatre Education****Exit Ticket**

Name:

Date:

3 things I learned today:

2 things I found interesting:

1 thing I want to work on:

Idea that stuck with you:

Questions I still have:

Free Space:

Post-Performance Reflection

Kelsey A. Meiklejohn, M.A. Student in Theatre Education

POST-PERFORMANCE STUDENT SELF-REFLECTION

Please answer the following questions using this scale, then explain your response.				
1	2	3	4	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Consider the rehearsal process and final performance and respond to the following statements.

1) The character analysis activities during rehearsal impacted my character choices.

1	2	3	4	6
---	---	---	---	---

Please explain: _____

2) When I came to rehearsal, I had the opportunity to contribute to decisions that affected my participation in the performance.

1	2	3	4	6
---	---	---	---	---

Please explain: _____

3) I feel as though I was adequately challenged to meet the advanced level of the material in the musical through the rehearsal and production process.

1	2	3	4	6
---	---	---	---	---

Please explain: _____

4) The exercises and instructor feedback added to my actor tool-box and offered new ideas and approaches that aided me in the rehearsal and performance process.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Please explain: _____

5) I believe that my skills and abilities in acting, singing, and dance have improved over the course of the rehearsal and performance process.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Please explain: _____
